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The
Violent
Friends

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This novel contains approximately 83,000 words which, in order to save paper, have been compressed within 191 pages. There are many more words on each page than would be desirable in normal times ; margins have been reduced and no space has been wasted between chapters. The length of the average novel is between 70,000 and 90,000 words which, ordinarily, make a book between 288 and 352 pages. This novel would ordinarily make a book of about 320 pages.

The greatest pleasure in life is love; the greatest treasure is contentment; the greatest possession is health; the greatest ease is sleep; and the greatest medicine is a true friend. Something like Home that is not Home, like Alone that is not Alone; to be wished for and only found in a Friend, or in his House.

SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE.

Violent friendship is much more lasting, and as much engaging, as violent love.

JONATHAN SWIFT.

The author, in writing this romance, has taken liberties with time and place; though indeed they are no more than Time itself takes with memory—even the memory of our own lives.

THE VIOLENT FRIENDS

a novel by

WINSTON CLEWES



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To

MY MOTHER AND FATHER
with my love

★



THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN COMPLETE
CONFORMITY WITH THE AUTHORISED
ECONOMY STANDARDS

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Chapter One

The bells of the Cathedral pealed incessantly, shaking the night with a jubilant clangour, tumbling headlong and again from top to bottom of a brazen stair. The bonfire in the close threw light into the dark room, light flickering on the walls, light leaping and slithering across the polished wood of the furniture, pulsing irregularly on the ceiling. The very air seemed alive, a living tissue of light and sound. In the centre of it, at his table in the window, the Dean sat in the dead core of silence his brain created for him. His face was hard, but his hands betrayed him. His hands rested on the table on either side of the package he had just sealed. They were empty, they trembled slightly. He looked at the little envelope without seeing it.

The will cannot shut out pain for ever. It began to come back. He met it resolutely as he always had. As a very young man at Moor Park, when the disease had first attacked him, he would fling himself furiously from his books and run like a madman, up the hill behind the house and back again, never stopping, half a mile in six minutes. Meet exhaustion with effort, face pain with still more pain, cow it, crush it, stamp it out. He had always done that; he did it now.

His mind turned to that time when his life had ended once before, as if by gathering together all the pain, all the rage, all the disappointment in the world he could crush the present under the weight of the past. He sought deliberately to blow up again the old fury, the old despair, to pile yesterday on to to-day, to remember everything together. Everything. Everything together.

Even the taste of vomit in his mouth came back with the rest. The cold ranting wind, whooping down the street between the

tall high-shouldered houses, the sickly yellow dusk, the black crouching hulk of the Cathedral against the sky. It was all there still, inside his head, all the wretchedness, the weariness of mind and body, the smell of Dublin tweaking at his tired nerves, the old Liffey smell of mould and sweet-scented decay. His cloak whipped about his legs in a pother of spiteful chilliness.

The street was empty. Through the roaring of the wind past his ears, he could hear his own heels clack-clacking on the cobbles, and the shuffling of the creature he had hired at the wharf to carry his saddlebags. He plodded on, wrapping the cloak more tightly about him, ramming his feet down hard on the stones, plunging into the pain that each step transmitted through every bone of his body to his head. It was fitting that his mental anguish should have its physical counterpart. One balanced the other neatly. Only the porter's dragging shuffle stayed outside the fantastic screaming pattern the two pains made, spoiling their symmetry. He halted and swung round. The man stopped too, and looked up at him vacantly. His eyes were innocent and childish, his mouth hung open showing his tongue. His lower jaw trembled with the cold. A pendent thread of spittle lost itself in the rags that covered his chest.

Anger died in the face of that blank stare, a bleak chill took its place. The words, too nearly spoken to be swallowed down, came out without force, spiritlessly.

"Pick up your feet. Pick up your feet, you dog."

The man might not have heard. He waited. The Doctor turned and walked on; the shuffling began again.

He walked more slowly now, with no anger to drive him. Only the pain remained, the stabbing dart in his ear fresh and sharp as though it were brand new, as though it had not been with him off and on, by his side or just round the corner, for thirty years. Only pain could outface that bland idiocy. Anger could not. Rage, clean and sweet, could burn up most things, grief, disappointment, corruption, filth—but not idiocy. Only pain could look into those empty eyes, and, most horribly, see kinship there.

So he walked more slowly; sometimes he tottered a little. He was too tired. The fires were out.

They came into the very shadow of the Cathedral.

The great doors, deep under the porch, were closed. On one of them a rag of paper fluttered. Out of pure weariness he paused, not so much to read as to stand, to stop walking. His eyes took in the words without the sense. Dada da da, dada da da—A sorry jingle. "To-day this Temple gets a Dean——" A sorry jingle for a Cathedral door. "He might a Bishop be in time, Did he believe in God."

He might—A Bishop be. His muscles tightened. His teeth met. The blurred words began to clear as he read on.

"Look down. St. Patrick, look we pray,
On thine own Church and Steeple;
Convert thy Dean on this great day,
Or else—God help the people."

By God. By God. He reached out, trembling, bruising his knuckles on the door; the paper flapped under his fingers. He tore it down and clenched his hand on it, crumpling it into his palm. God help the people, God help them indeed.

"Here, sirrah. Begone."

The idiot dropped the bags, scrabbled for the coin in the gutter, and shuffled away. In front of the Deanery a dog was about its business. It squatted painfully, legs apart, ears back to its head, and looked round at him, pleading eyes ringed with white.

Dublin in all her glory.

God help the people.

The dog fled at his approach. He marched up the steps and thundered on the door.

The woman who opened it at last was tall, like a Grenadier. She held a candlestick in one hand, and shielded the candle's flame with the other. She peered out at him. The reflected light of the candle cast her face in heavy lines, emphasising the well-marked moustache on her upper lip.

"Is it Doctor Swift?" she said in a man's voice.

He regarded her lowering, as though the question were an impertinence. "Mistress Johnson," he said. "She is here?" Adding, before she could answer, "My bags," and pointing down the steps.

"I'll send Robert after them," she said composedly. "Miss

Esther is upstairs, and Mistress Dingley too. Shall I not see you up ? ” She stood aside, holding the candle inwards at arm’s length, invitingly.

He swept past her, and as she closed the door began the ascent of the stairs, placing his feet flat on the treads, solidly, his shadow cast by the flickering candle flame advancing hesitantly before him, growing larger as he mounted higher, until he seemed to be walking into its embracing arms. At the top of the stairs two glowing sparks resolved themselves into a cat’s eyes. It slid by him softly, large and grey, keeping close to the wall, away from the skirts of his cloak. He turned.

“ Which door ? ”

“ On your right, sir.”

He opened the door, and light came out to meet him. He stepped inside and looked around.

Stella was standing by the table. Her hand rested on it. She looked as he had expected her to look, as he had known she would look. He knew all her looks, like the pages of a book. This one she kept for him alone. It was—tender, understanding, kind—— Why must she look so kind ? His heart contracted: sometimes he felt—sometimes he could find it in him to hate her. He dropped his head menacingly, like a bull.

“ Soh,” he said, a mere breath. He took off his great shovel hat and said with an unpleasant effect of mockery, “ Your servant, ma’am.” He bowed shortly. Stella said nothing. She curtsied. From a chair by the fire Dingley’s head appeared. She gave an impression of having been for some time nerving herself to the effort. She too curtsied, and he said more elaborately and with even less sincerity, “ Ma’am, your servant.”

The head sank again, out of sight below the back of the chair. He stepped up to the table, and laid his hat upon it. Beside the hat he placed the torn and crumpled paper from the door of the Cathedral. He stood looking at it, listening, sniffing the air like a hound, and fumbling with the fastening of his cloak. It came free. He wheeled round.

“ And who is this—person ? ” he asked gently.

The question brought Stella to life. She came forward eagerly. He knew what was in her mind. His choler hung heavy in the air. She had sensed it; she always did; and she was seizing, as she always did, any means to prevent its bursting

out. As though he were a child, to be diverted. He felt rage welling up inside him, fiery, not to be quenched, knowing that her solicitude was for him, him only.

"Your housekeeper, Jonathan," she said charmingly. "Mrs. Brent, this is Doctor Swift."

So he had a housekeeper. And a cat. He was domesticated quite. As for money: no doubt heaven in its bounty——

"Aah! My housekeeper," he said between his teeth. "But can she keep house? Can you, ma'am? Can you keep house?"

The grenadier recoiled from the virulence of his manner. Her mouth opened, but no words issued. He stuck his hands beneath his coat-tails and said scathingly, "No tongue. She is dumb." He took two steps and wheeled on her again. "A noble house. A noble home-coming." His voice gagged in his throat. "A noble welcome, faith. Harkee, woman," he said in a muffled tone. "I travel eight nights and eight days. I cross the sea. The winds of heaven rock me. I spew. Weary and sick at heart, I come to my own place—and find—what? That——" Now the room rang; he pounded on the paper on the table. "And by my own steps, before my own door, may God burn me, a monstrous fresh-dropped excrement, reeking from the dog that dropped it."

Saliva filled his mouth, acrid with sickness. He longed to spit, but instead said, on a lower, grating key, "Your dog, ma'am?"

"No, sir," the housekeeper said. "We have no dog."

He nodded slowly. "Ha. You have no dog. A strange dog leaves its favour at my door. But you have a cat."

"We have that, sir," the housekeeper said. "She—she keeps down the mice."

"Aye," he said in a changed voice of sudden weariness. "I thought I spied her on the stair. A great stinking cat, a Whig, I've no doubt, from her skulking ways. Well, see that she makes no messes, ma'am, nor no noise either, or you shall lose her. Bring wine."

So he had had his outburst. He had shouted, and raved, and Stella had watched, quietly, and waited till it was done. It was done now, and had been better left undone. He drew in a great breath. His head ached. He fought down a desire to put his

hand to his ear, and caught sight of the housekeeper, still standing at the door.

"Wine, woman," he said heavily. "Wine. Wine. Begone."

He walked over to the empty armchair by the fire, sat down, and put his head in his hands, elbows on knees. The skin of his palms was dry and hot against the tight hot skin of his brow. No comfort there. No comfort anywhere in the world. No ease, no rest. He could still hear his voice, lingering, roughening the quiet of the room, thrusting into its peacefulness his own torment. Stella said softly, "Jonathan." He heard her but could not bring himself to answer. "Jonathan," she said again, louder. He raised his head and looked at her dully.

"Aye," he said.

"Are you well, Jonathan?" she asked.

"Well enough," he said, impatiently. She was not so easily put off. He dragged out more words. "I have been sick. Swimming in the head, but not to excess." Still she waited. "The noise in my ears is worst, but I am enured to it, you know well enough it is an old friend." He stretched his big frame in the chair. "I am weary," he ended in an irritable tone. "Well enough, but weary."

"Poor Jonathan," she said soothingly, so that he winced. "You shall rest, my dear, and be easy, and all will be well to-morrow."

"Aye, to-morrow," he said with an immense bitterness. "I shall be well to-morrow."

"And happy?"

"Happy? Why yes. I shall be happy—to-morrow. To-night I am sick, to-night I am damnably melancholy. But to-morrow—I shall be happy. Oh yes, to-morrow."

He was silent. The silence in the room expanded suffocatingly. The knowledge that he had hurt her drove him on.

"To-night I am nobody. Faith, no. I am wrong. I am Dean. And they pin—that—on my Cathedral door." He gestured at the paper on the table. His voice was sick. "That's for to-night, but to-morrow, to-morrow no doubt I shall be king, king of this happy land of thieves and idiots, stinks, filth, and Irishmen."

She picked up the paper without speaking, smoothed out its

creases and read, while the doggerel reformed itself in his mind: or else God help the people. His eyes were savage, watching her.

"It's monstrous," she said in a gasp.

"Monstrous," he agreed. "But only to-night. To-morrow——" There was a knock at the door. "Enter, you," he said harshly.

The housekeeper came in. She carried a decanter, and glasses, on a silver tray. He gave her a morose stare. She placed the tray hastily on the table and went out, glancing over her shoulder. He hoisted his body out of the chair. "What ails the woman?" he said without interest. "Is she mute? She stares and stares." He poured a glass of wine, and held it to the light.

"You frighten her, Jonathan," Stella said.

"And why not?" he asked, returning to the fire with his wine. "I frighten myself. 'Tis true, and all about me. They point at me in the street, the dogs. There goes Doctor Swift, they say, the great Doctor Swift that rode so high and fell so flat, that would have been Bishop and ended—Dean. Lampoon him on his own church door. Mock him, revile him—and beware him. He never had a friend that did not rue it, nor a cause that did not fail. God save you from Doctor Swift, my masters."

He took in the wine at a draught.

"Pah," he said violently. "An ugly nasty stinking liquor. A right regal St. Patrick's wine. Would you poison me, sirrahs? Would you poison me too?"

He plumped into the chair and sat scowling. The silence fell again. Only the fire crackled, in little spurts and plops of flame. Mrs. Dingley began nervously to gather up her thimble, her silks, her piece of needlework. She was anxious to make no sound, but nervous. She rustled the bag in which she kept her things, plunged her hand into it, patted it, shooting little scared glances at the Dean. He said loudly and abruptly, "Where now, mistress? Will you go? No, you shall not. Sit, and tell me your news."

She was suddenly rigid. She looked quickly at Stella and away again, wetting her lips. He went on as if she had spoken. "So. Now tell me. I cannot wait to hear. Has Goody Walls

dropped another brat? And how much have you lost at the cards since I heard from you?"

All this, staring at the floor. Not moving. And at the end his voice dying away, like a clock running down: "Let us chat, and be comfortable."

Stella watched him with her tender look. After a moment she said, "Is it so bad, Jonathan?"

Without stirring he said painfully, "You shall not pity me. Before God, you shall not." She made a little movement, as if of denial.

"I? Pity you?"

"You do not hate me?"

"No."

"Then you must pity me. But you shall not. I am shamed enough." He stood up, almost overturning the chair. It was as if he had cried out. He began to pace up and down. "Do you think I have no pride? Do you think I do not mind how I have talked and wrote? Stella shall be easy, quoth I, happy, healthy and wealthy. I would do this; I would do that. I was to do great things——"

"You have done great things," she said gently.

"A Deanery in this wretched dirty dog-hole," he said. "This—prison. Aye, great things indeed." He stood looking into the fire.

"You have no cause to reproach yourself," she said. He shook her words off his shoulders. "What, then?" she asked. He stared into the fire.

"It was—it was pitiful," he said in a low rough tone. "A year ago, one short year, and we were——" He stopped. "The three of us," he went on more strongly, "Oxford, Bolingbroke—and Doctor Swift. We were masters of the universe. They crowded round me in the anteroom, yapping for favours. And now——"

"And now?"

"The Queen is dead," he said deeply. "And truly I believe with Arbuthnot that sleep was never more welcome to weary traveller than death was to her. The German clod sits upon her throne with that blood-soaked braggart Marlborough for his lackey. Oxford is in the Tower. Bolingbroke fled to France. And I—I would to God I were with them, with either. They

are great men, but I—am not so great. My head is not worth the chopping off."

"You wrong yourself, Jonathan," Stella said. "And praise them out of all reason. They treated you not so greatly."

"They trusted me," he said angrily. "I was their friend."

"They used you first," she said, inflexible. "And misused you after. You are the same man now as then. They are the smaller for having failed you. Where are their promises now?"

"No," he said. "No. I will not have it so. Rather, where are they?"

"You cannot help them where they are. They could have helped you, but did not."

"It was time," he said. "Time, time. They left it too late. We could not believe——" He sighed. "I remember," he said wearily, "when I was a little boy, I felt a great fish at the end of my line. I drew it up almost on the ground, but it dropped in. The disappointment vexes me to this day. It was the type of all my disappointments. Now I have fished for five years, and here I am with nothing, not even philosophy to bear me up. God send stupidity to take the place of it."

"Oh, Jonathan, Jonathan," she said with a sweet chiding. "Have you not your true friends?"

"Friends?" he repeated. "Now if it were enemies. I have them by the score, friends only by the couple, and they say one enemy can do more hurt than ten friends can do good."

"And do you think so?" she said. He sat down in the chair, in the same posture as before, head in hands. His words came thickly. "I think 'tis time for me to have done with the world," he said. "Not to die here in a rage, like a poisoned rat in a hole." He looked up at her. "Oh, Stella," he said, "there is peace and quiet with you, and nowhere else, and I have failed you." His head dropped. She moved impulsively to him, to put her arm round his shoulders. "Stella," he said again, like a sob.

Stella. There was peace and quiet with you.
The bells pealed on, joyously.

Chapter Two

His passion for bodily fatigue was insatiable. His energy, on the other hand, was inexhaustible. He was always walking. He did not care where he went, but would plunge down the steps of the Deanery door, past the front of the Cathedral, and into the net of little streets and alleys that made up the Kevin Bail. He walked fast, with head down and shoulders set, as though attacking the distance between him and a definite goal; seeing nothing, striding with his athletic step over the cobblestones, across gullies brimming with scummy filth, round blind turnings without slackening and without a thought for the oncoming passenger, who might leap aside or be damned to him.

His bulky figure, shovel-hatted, wigged, with outflying cloak, seeming enormously magnified in the soft smoky Dublin air of autumn, was familiar in the first few days in every corner of the liberties. The derisive shouts of the impudent half-naked brats that overran the place like vermin were stilled soon. When the noise penetrated his mind, which was seldom, he would stop and look at them terribly, so that an appalled silence fell, as when he had snubbed and cowed the Cathedral dignitaries who came to see the new Dean. He was unapproachable and unapproached; the streets would empty before him, often he would reach the river without having passed a living being. There he would stand for a long moment, like a man in the fixation of a bad dream, staring at the flowing water, carrying on its bosom, like life itself, unnamed and obscene refuse. The river moved on everlastingly, its burden was always the same.

The Archbishop wrote to him, ignoring with the utmost blandness his pointed omission to pay a ceremonial call. This enraged him even more than reproof would have done. To reproof he could have opposed a ferocious insubordination. To a polite request to consider the matter of rebuilding the Cathedral

spire there was really no rejoinder but to defend the Cathedral as it was. He was led to consider the cathedral. He sat at the writing-desk in the window and looked at the black building lying like a dead body across the close. He felt no pride in it, scorn rather, but behind and beneath the scorn a shadowy sensation of ownership found birth in his mind. It was a preposterous thing in a man whose sphere had been metropolitan and national, whose spirit was one raw wound from the forcible amputation of all his interests. He shied away from examining it, would not have admitted it under torture. But as for interference, even archiepiscopal interference—Doctor King must quickly learn with whom he had to do. He picked up his pen and wrote with a vicious spluttering: "My Lord——"

He gave the words a twisted look, and said aloud with an intonation bitter and contemptuous: "My Lord."

Behind him the housekeeper murmured apologetically, "I beg your pardon, sir." It startled him. He had had no idea she was there. He turned scowling. She stood submissively, her hands clasped before her. Gradually the scowl vanished; he looked at her with a considering eye, and finally asked smoothly, "What think you of our Cathedral, ma'am?"

The question was unexpected; she showed her surprise.

"You admire it, maybe? Or, maybe, you despise it?" A hint of menace in the last words confused her still more.

"Why, sir," she said tentatively. "It is—I think it is very well."

"Do you so?" he said. "Then we are agreed together. But not with the Archbishop. No. His Lordship finds it small and mean. Perhaps we too are small and mean. Or idle, it may be. But his Lordship will mend all. He will elevate us above our little selves, lift us up to heaven, inspire us, in fact—with a new spire. And here, ma'am," and he slapped the letter on his desk with a flat palm, "are his directions for the building of it. So. We are architects. We build."

"No doubt His Grace knows best," the housekeeper said.

"No doubt." He gave her a sharp look, and added, "and Mrs. Brent knows better."

"I know nothing, sir," she said with a sturdy spirit. "But I'm thinking His Grace maybe knows more of heaven than of this sinful world, and more of spires than of mean dirty streets."

"What," he said. "Do you criticize the Archbishop, you impudent slut?" He sucked in his cheeks, watching her under his thick brows.

"I hope I know my station, sir," she said.

"I hope so, faith." His good humour grew. "Come, no more riddles. What is it you would say?"

"I'll say no more, sir."

"Cudso, but you shall." He paused, but she made no answer. "I'll have no obstinate woman in my house, d'ye hear. Speak up now."

"I mean no more than you can see for yourself," she said, goaded. "Or His Grace either, if he would get down from his carriage and risk soiling his fine purple gown. But I doubt not his eyes are too set on his spire to notice the gutter."

"So," he said. "The Archbishop must walk in the gutter?"

"I'd have no one walk in the gutter," she said with some heat, reserve gone. "But there's a many has no choice. There they're born and there they stay."

"Hogs live in sties and do well there," he said.

"These are no hogs, sir."

"Irishmen, then." He was egging her on.

"And what's so different about an Irishman," she demanded, "that he shouldn't live the same as other men do? He's made the same——"

"He stinks worse," he said roundly.

"And so would many a fine gentleman," she cried, "if he dwelt in filth, with none to lift a hand but to hold his nose as he passed by."

"A bite," he said boisterously. "A pure bite. Troth, sweetheart, you should have my pulpit. I never preached half so good a sermon in my life."

She drew herself up, and flushed. "Now you're pleased to joke with me, sir," she said primly.

"I?" he said. "Not I. I never joke." He drew in his cheeks and regarded her with a solemn look. It was months since he had been so diverted.

She kept her eyes on the floor. "Well, sir, if that is all." The grenadier was as embarrassed as a girl. "I have my work to do."

"And so have I," he said. "And so have I. You may go,

ma'am." He watched her out, pleased; passing over her championship of his parishioners in his pleasure. The woman had backbone. He liked obstinacy in others, when it was shown in defending opinions he held to himself. Stella was to be congratulated on her choice of Mrs. Brent. He had not seen Stella since the day of his arrival. Unfailingly she had caught his wish, and had not come. She should come that night; he would tell her.

He sat reflectively, tapping on the table and looking out on to the quiet close. Its undisturbed peace penetrated his consciousness gradually; his face clouded. The momentary exhilaration of his rallying of Mrs. Brent died away. He did not ask for peace; his mind, he had been told once, was like a conjured spirit that would do mischief if he did not give it employment. In the bustle of the court, he was at home; in the chatter of the coffee-house, he was at ease and free. The surge of London swelled inside his head and was gone. The ghost of a scent was in his nostrils—the smell of Will's, where a chair was, had used to be, kept for him alone. Savoury with onion, heavy with tobacco smoke, it struck nostalgically at his heart, like a sudden blow—and was gone. He frowned. He tapped irritably; the Archbishop's letter rustled beneath his fingers.

The frown deepened. He detected a faint flavour of patronage in his Lordship's calm indication of a suitable direction for his future activity. The distance between his Lordship's self and the mere Dean, mere Dean, however known in a foreign world, was subtly emphasized. His gaze swung upwards to the offending spire. His jaw set; he rose abruptly to his feet.

The choir was labouring painfully. The sound of their voices hung in the dark nave like a thin tattered flag flapping in a doleful breeze. The Dean knew nothing of music, his ear could not follow a tune, but he liked a soft smooth noise, a hearty turbulent clamour. This was neither. He waited till they were done, prowling up and down the side aisles, noting the grime on the windows, the rags, the straw, and varied filth in the darker corners of the floor. His disgust grew at every step. This—his cathedral, this—shed, this—byre. Theme enough here for Doctor King to play on, without pushing new spires into the sky. But it should be changed; it should be changed, and soon.

The choir straggled out. His nose wrinkled fastidiously as they passed him. Dirt affected him unpleasantly; dirty humanity made his gorge rise. In a strong stomached age he was queasy to the point of eccentricity, changed his small-clothes every day, and his stockings. The choir was fit for the Cathedral; the Cathedral fit for Dublin. He presented a black brow to young Doctor Sheridan advancing down the aisle towards him, open-faced, cheerful, and polite.

"Good morning, Dean," the young man said heartily, and received a stare in reply. There was an uneasy silence.

"That should give you no cause for congratulations, Doctor Sheridan," he said at last. "You do your best to mar it."

Sheridan looked at him uncertainly. "Why——" he began, and was interrupted.

"That was your choir, was it not? That dismal cater-wauling?" The question was a threat.

"It was, sir," the young doctor said. "But——"

"It will not do, sir. I tell you, it will not do. This is a Cathedral, though it stinks like a midden, neither a Lutheran meeting-house nor a dunghill for a parcel of ragged cocks to crow upon, but a Cathedral. And while I am Dean of it, it shall have a choir worthy of the name, despite Doctor Thomas Sheridan." He stuck his hands beneath his coat-tails, and added harshly: "You hear me?"

"I hear you, sir," Sheridan said, "and the choir too. What is amiss with the choir, may I ask?" The softness of the tone did not disguise the hardihood of the words. The Dean quivered. "You have ears, have you not?" he asked with an effort at repression.

"I have," Sheridan returned, unabashed. "And to my ears the choir seems very well."

The Dean said thickly, "The choir seems very well." Suddenly he turned about, and walked rapidly down the aisle and out of the door. In the porch he paused, and as Sheridan came out into the daylight swung on him again, his face congested. "Do not play the puppy with me, young man." His voice rose to a half-shout. "It will not serve you."

Sheridan stood his ground. "I am no puppy, sir," he said plainly, "neither will I be browbeaten. I have no turn for disrespect, and mean none, when I say the choir seems very well

to me. And indeed, sir, it is very well. It is more than very well. It is one of God's miracles that those who compose it have hearts to sing at all."

The Dean sneered. "So," he said sourly, "now we are upon miracles. And hearts, too. Do these miraculous yowlers sing with their hearts?"

"They sing from their hearts," Sheridan said. "Though God knows they have little enough to sing for, unless empty bellies be counted for salvation."

Swift threw up his hands. "Heaven preserve us," he said, still half sneering. "Here is another."

"Another?" the younger man said.

"Never mind, Doctor Sheridan," he said. "I am beleaguered on all sides by lovers of Irishmen. It is my misfortune, never mind it."

"There is no need to love Irishmen to hate starvation," Sheridan said hotly. "Would you have me laugh at misery and the extreme of want? Is oppression to be joked about?"

"No," Swift said wearily. His hand went to his brow. "No, indeed, it is not. You are a bold young man, Doctor Sheridan. I would not have you other. Good day to you, sir."

He went off slowly. The pain was back again; it thundered in his head like the roar of a tormented rock-bound sea. The sides of the narrow street converged swaying above him, the ground beneath his feet rolled and pitched fantastically. His will held him upright, walking. To stop was defeat, to lean against the wall was death. He would not give way. Passion had its price, which he would pay, since he knew of no way of meeting life without it. He was as he was made. He could not change.

Gradually his head cleared, the noises sank into the background, the pain became bearable. He could see again, he could think again. For the first time since his arrival in Dublin his thoughts were not of himself, his eyes were open and turned outwards. He walked through the liberties of St. Patrick's seeing and hearing, and for the first time the misery about him was not a reflection of his own misery, nor the want a simulacrum of his own disappointment.

He came upon an old woman sitting on a door-sill. Her head

was wrapped in a dirty shawl, her bare feet thrust into shapeless objects which could not be called shoes. The grime on her ankles was polished like leather. Between her knees was a battered pot, into which she was peeling potatoes. She looked up and saw him watching her.

"A good morning to your Reverence," she said, in a cracked voice.

"You find it so?" he said.

"Ah sure." She showed him toothless gums. "'Tis fine and warm, and there's taties for the pot, praise God."

"Are you a Christian then?" he asked.

"I'm no dirty Papisher, if that's what you're meaning," she said with a sly look. "As for Christian, as much as the next, maybe more. Fasting's holy, and I've done plenty."

"So," he said. "You fast."

"When needs must," she said cheerfully. "No more."

"Holy indeed," he said grimly. "And have you a name?"

"As good as your Honour's," she said, affronted. "Aye, or any in Dublin."

"Take care," he said, with a brutal hardness. "I'll have no insolence."

"And if you want crawling to, you may try next door," she retorted. "My name's Macartney, 'tis a good name, and not so low yet that any can wipe their feet on it."

He stared at her. "You have a husband?" he asked at last.

"I had, God rest his soul," she said. "He's beyond trouble. I have a son though, and a good son, too."

"Where is your son?"

"He's away out," she said. "Scrattin' for a living on the bare hillside."

"A farmer?" he asked.

"Farmer nothing," she said. "A weaver, like his father before him."

"Then why does he not weave?"

She shaded her eyes with her hand and peered up at him. "Sure your Honour's not so simple," she said. "Who should he weave for?"

"I'm no drapier," he said, "or he might weave for me. There are drapiers in Dublin, are there not? Why not for them?"

"You may ask," she said. "They won't buy, because they can't sell. 'Tis the law. English law." She spat, and grinned at him with a wry mouth.

"English law," he repeated.

"The devil fly away with it," she said viciously. "And England too. We must starve so they may grow fat." She picked up another potato and began to peel it, digging at the eyes as though they were in an English head.

"Do you say so," he said. He stood in thought for a moment. Then rousing himself, he took a coin from his pocket and threw it on the ground beside her. "Put some meat in the pot," he said roughly, and began to walk.

She thrust it from her with her foot. "Is it charity now?" she cried after him.

He stopped and turned. "Charity?" he said. "Not it. We are in the same galley, mistress. We must share or die." He walked on through the teeming verminous streets. He saw everything with an almost unnatural clarity: the jolly beggar at the street corner, forearm exposed to show a sickening sore over which the flies clustered; his jolly mate with two wooden legs stuck out before him across the footway like a hurdle. He saw their faces grow long and solemn and solicitous as he came up; heard them jeering behind him as he passed. This was the Kevin Bail, sore-eyed, pallid, scratching, unregenerate, its voice a counterpoint of whispered evil and shouted obscenity, its stink rising like an affront to the clear sky. In his mind the house-keeper, the divine, and the old woman disputed together, while resolution grew and hardened within him.

In the afternoon he sent word to Stella, in his brusque way, that she should come to him. She came, with Mrs. Dingley, and found him sitting at the writing-desk in the window, toying with his pen and looking over at the Cathedral in the gathering dusk.

He rose and came forward to meet them. "Well," he said, surveying them. "So you are come at last." He took both Stella's hands in his and gave them a little shake. "And how is M D?" he asked. "Come, sit you down. How is she, Rebecca?" He installed them in chairs on either side of the fire. "Is she a good girl, or naughty," he went on without pause. "Does she take care? No more headaches? No

coughs?" The words were addressed to Mrs. Dingley, but otherwise she might not have been there. He was talking to Stella. Nevertheless, Dingley answered.

"I tell her she should lie down in the afternoons," she said in her comfortable querulous voice. "But she will not, no, not she. She won't mind me, Mr. Dean. You must speak to her. Why, only yesterday——"

"I'll speak to her," Swift said. "And to some purpose. Why will you not lie down, Madam?"

"Brr," Stella said. She pretended to shiver with fear. "What a great bear owns this chilly cave. How frightened the little bears must be. I would not be a little bear for all the world." She laughed with a pleasant infectious sound.

The Dean knitted his brows at her. "Ha," he said. "So it has come so far. You jest. You sit there with a face pale as a cheese and jest. Must I command you to take care? Or should I fawn like a puppy and beg you?"

She laughed again. "No, truly, Jonathan," she said. "I am well, indeed I am. As for pallor, you know it is natural to me. Besides, I have even been told—that it becomes me." Her look was exaggeratedly arch.

"God save us," he said. "'Tis time I came. What jackanapes told you that?"

"It was no jackanapes," she said with assumed dignity. "It had the authority of your cloth."

"A parson?" he said. "They are the worst always, the dogs. What fly-by-night cleric have you in your train?"

"None at all," she said promptly. "This is a most respectable young schoolmaster. He has a silly wife, and four noisy children. He admires me—and venerates you."

"Hm," he said. "The last is in his favour, but hardly weights the scale against the first. What is this semi-paragon's name?"

"Doctor Thomas Sheridan," she said. "I commend him to you heartily." She caught his look and asked, "You know him?"

"We have met," he said darkly.

"And is he not a pleasant charming young man?"

"He has a strange way of showing veneration," he said, and was silent. She looked at him questioningly, then, as he did not

“But how are you, Jonathan?” she asked. “Are you better?”

“I?” he said. “Do not ask. I am tired of myself. I, I, I, always I, the unfruitful I. I am a castaway, marooned upon a desert isle, among savages that are kept savage by the same that marooned me. A pretty picture, is it not, to please that fellow that stood in the pillory—I have forgot his name. I have no fancy for dwelling on it. I had sooner work.”

She eyed him thoughtfully. “Jonathan,” she began. There was a kind of warning in her tone, but before she could go on he said heartily: “That is a good creature, your Mrs. Brent, a very grenadier among women. Or, no, not a grenadier: liker a—a baronet, a fine upstanding outspoken pillar of righteousness. Where did you find her?”

“I knew her,” she said, pleased. “I knew her not easily shouted down nor stared into submission——”

“What’s this?” he cried. “Here’s a fine thing. Am I attacked in my own house?”

“Attacked?” she said innocently. “I spoke of Mrs. Brent, Jonathan.”

“Aye,” he said, and sucked in his cheeks. “I thought I heard you. But never mind. What of Mrs. Brent?”

“She is Scotch by birth,” she said.

“But you shall not hold that against her,” he said boisterously. “No doubt she was not consulted. Let her be. She is to help me in my scheme.”

“Your scheme,” she said, as if in doubt.

“My scheme,” he repeated, “that I am trying to tell you of if you would but let me speak for your tattle. With your leave we’ll have her up and tell her of it too.”

He pulled at the bell-rope, and stood with his hands beneath his coat-tails, warming his buttocks at the fire. He had made up his mind on a course of action and was for the moment content. So, for a moment, the atmosphere of the room was content also, warm and quiet, the very likeness of home. The door opened and Mrs. Brent came in. She stood respectfully just inside, and waited.

“Mrs. Brent,” he said at last. She inclined her head without speaking. “You love the Irish?”

“No, sir,” she said. He looked at Stella, as if to say, you see.

"You love mankind then?"

"No, sir," she said steadily, not to be drawn.

"Nor I," he said. "In fact, I hate them very heartily. But I heartily love Tom and Dick and Harry, and so forth, and them I would help. You shall help me help them."

"I, sir?" she said at a loss.

"Aye," he said, "you. But do not mistake me." He stared at her threateningly. "I am not wealthy, far from it. Oh true, I am Dean—but with a Deanery yet to pay for. I am not wealthy; never forget it, ma'am, or we shall part company, you and I." His stare was fiercer still. She said nothing. He went on more quietly. "Very well, then. I am Dean, and so I am set to mend the public in the little sphere in which I am placed. I am not wealthy, but I have a little. If of that little I give an even littler portion to Tom, Dick and Harry, we shall not starve—and neither will they. So we shall be no worse off, and they will be better. Is that plain good sense or not?"

He looked round him with an air of satisfaction. Stella smiled up at him; Mrs. Brent said, "Yes, sir."

"But I am not concerned with beggars," he burst out after a moment. "Be clear on that. They may beg, with a pox—but under my licence only. They shall have badges—which they will not like—but if beggary be not able to beat out pride, it cannot deserve charity. No, no: it is with those who can work, but have not the means, that we have to do, and with the old, God help them.. Those who can work, shall work: we shall find a means, and lend them sufficient to begin—which, mark you, they shall pay back at the rate of one shilling each week, with such interest as shall meet an accountant's fee. Those who are too old and feeble, ancient and orderly widows and the like, shall have an almshouse and a pittance, so that at least they may die warm. That is my project; and you, mistress"—he shook a finger at Mrs. Brent—"you shall be steward of it. What do you say?"

"Sir, it is princely," she said in a kind of gasp.

"Ma'am, it is fiddlesticks," he said roughly. "But you are steward of it. Do you know the business of a steward?"

"No, sir."

"It is to watch the interest, ma'am. The interest, that is the root of the matter." He looked at her under lowered brows.

"Think well upon it, and to-morrow bring me a list of some you know to be middling honest, and middling clean. Or if there be none honest, let them only wash once a week, and I will consider them." He paused. She did not move. "Well," he said then, "why do you wait? I have done. Be off." He turned his back on her and stood looking into the fire. She made as if to speak, and looked helplessly at Stella, who motioned to her, go. She went out. As the door closed, Swift quickly turned again.

"Well, poppet?" he said to Stella.

She rose and placed her hand on his arm. "It is very well," she said affectionately. "It is like you, Jonathan. I am so glad. I had feared——" She broke off.

"You had feared?"

She looked at him with a doubtful expression. "I thought," she began. She patted his arm. "I thought there might be more——" He left her and walked over to the window.

"Well, now," he said to the darkness outside, "as to that——"

She sat down and clasped her hands. "I knew it," she said. "Jonathan, Jonathan, why must you always——"

He broke in, facing her. "I must because I must," he said with terrific violence. "Are they to go scot free? By God, they shall not, while I have a pen and a hand to drive it. It is not enough that they should hound Bolingbroke to France, cage Oxford in a dungeon, immure me in this—this——" He choked, and then recovered. "No. They must also surround me with misery, with want, with filth, with starvation, with the degradation into bestiality of an entire people. Go out. Walk through the Liberties—the liberties, by God. Government without the consent of the governed, that is slavery. But if the governed are sunk so low they have not even the wits left to know their own condition, what is that? Are there words?" He took a deep breath as though his lungs would burst. "It is too much. But it shall recoil upon them. It shall strike them down."

His voice rumbled away. In the distance he felt the pain approaching. He stood waiting for it, scowling. The firelight tossed his distorted image capriciously about the room.

Chapter Three

A message went to Sheridan, bidding him to the Deanery. Its phrasing was imperious: the Dean asked no man favours, least of all the minor clergy. Sheridan deserted his school and went promptly.

"Your servant, Doctor Swift," he said. His manner was polite, but not subservient. There was a sparkle in his eye that Swift found irritating for no reason at all.

"Yours, sir," he said shortly. "Be seated, please."

"I am delighted you sent for me, sir," the younger man said, "I have been wishing to make your better"—he stressed the word—"your better acquaintance. After our choral rencounter the other day," he added.

The Dean favoured him with a cold blue stare. "Indeed," he said. "I am honoured. I had no thought to have aroused your interest."

"Now really, Mr. Dean," Sheridan said. "I am the most unfortunate of men. Every time I open my mouth I offend you. I beg you to believe it is not meant."

Swift's eye did not waver. "I believe it is not," he said at last. "I believe you are something of a rogue, Dr. Sheridan, something of a flatterer. I have heard of you. I am forewarned. Keep your flattery for ladies' ears, I pray you. I'll have none of it."

Sheridan for a fleeting moment looked almost embarrassed, and then smiled. "'Tis nothing to my disadvantage you have heard, I trust," he said.

"So far, no," Swift said. "Nothing worse than your choir—which we shall mend yet."

"Then can I serve you?"

"You may." He paused. "I need a printer."

"A——?"

"A printer, man, a printer." He paused again. "There is

a small matter—I gathered, t’other day, that you consider yourself to have the monopoly in this city of hatred, hatred for oppression, injustice, starvation. You are wrong in that, Dr. Sheridan, as no doubt in many other things besides. I, too, am no bad hater. And what I hate I fight, in my own way, with my own weapon.” He took his quill from the inkstand, and shook it gently in the air. “No, do not smile, sir. Its point is sharper than you would think. It is feathered also, and its shafts can fly far. They have flown farther, and bit deep, into greater men than perhaps you know of. So—I need a printer. And something more. He must be honest, secret, silent. Is there a printer in Dublin with no tongue?”

Sheridan thought a moment, then, “There is Harding, in St. Francis Street,” he said.

“Harding?”

“He is a safe man, and a good Irishman.”

“That last damns all.”

“I think not, sir,” Sheridan said. “For your present purpose.”

“What do you know of my purpose?” he asked harshly.

“I know nothing, sir,” Sheridan retorted. “I am very stupid.”

Swift drew in his cheeks. “So,” he said. “Dr. Sheridan, I almost like you. You are, as you say, very stupid, and yet for a very stupid man you show—occasionally—an extraordinary glimmering of reason.”

He blushed like a girl. “I am not the only flatterer, then,” he said, and got the same cold stare in return.

“Modesty can be overplayed,” the Dean said in a forbidding tone. “You are not so stupid as to rate stupidity a virtue?”

“I’m sorry, sir,” he said.

“And will be sorrier yet,” Swift said briskly, “unless that tongue of yours be curbed in time. You are a family man, I am told.”

“Yes, sir,” he said. “I have two boys and two girls.”

“You are too fluent altogether,” Swift said. “And yet I expect for a schoolmaster a family is no bad thing?”

“It helps,” he admitted, “sometimes.”

“But I dare swear,” the Dean said, “you had not that in your mind when you married.”

Sheridan grinned cheerfully. "No, sir," he said. "I cannot say I had."

"Then why did you marry?"

Now he was taken quite aback, groped for his answer, and finally laughed. "I have wondered myself," he said. Swift nodded slowly. "I suppose I was in love," he added with a humorously doubtful air.

Swift nodded again. "In love," he said, lingering on the word. "And you suppose. Your tongue carried you away, and now, you suppose, you were in love. Why do you suppose, Dr. Sheridan? Allow me to tell you. You suppose you were in love, not only because you are no longer in love, but because your wife is a silly woman, with whom you cannot imagine you ever were in love. Am I not right?"

Sheridan drew himself up. "I am no longer in love, sir," he said stiffly.

"No airs, I beg you," Swift said. "There is the epitaph of married bliss. Love, and then love no more." He sat forward in his chair. "I tell you too late, Doctor Sheridan, that love is a delusion. It is for animals, not for wise men, a mere matter of bedding together, heat, darkness, desire, and disappointment the bitterer for being merited. Friendship is cleaner, and happier too." His voice fell away suddenly, as though he had said something he had not intended to say; as though the words had escaped him unawares. Sheridan was silent too.

"So, my friend," the Dean said at last, "you are stupid, but no stupider than the rest. We shall see what can be done for you and those four brats of yours. Meanwhile, Harding it was you said, was it not, and of St. Francis Street? You think him safe?"

"Safe, and silent as the grave," Sheridan said. "I will vouch for him with my life."

"Tongue, tongue," Swift said dryly. "There is no need to die. Only bring him to me."

There came a knocking on the door: at Swift's word Mrs. Brent entered. "Sir," she said, "there is a lady below, wishing to see you."

"Lady?" he said. "I know no ladies. Bid her begone."

"She knows you, sir," the housekeeper said. "She says she is an old friend."

"Her name?" Swift asked.

"She would not give it."

"An old friend, but has no name. Good Gad," he said angrily, "am I a man to have assignations with nameless females?" Mrs. Brent stood unmoved, waiting. "Very well, admit this lady. But may heaven help her if she lies. You see," he said to Sheridan. "We talk of marriage, but only let a woman in your house, and trouble will follow. You will bring Harding to me then, and at night, be sure of that. Will he come?"

"He will come, or——" Sheridan stopped abruptly.

"Or you will die again," Swift said mockingly. He followed Sheridan's eyes, and stood up with a sharp movement.

The woman in the doorway curtsied very low. "Your most obedient, humble servant, sir," she said.

The Dean did not speak; there was something incredulous in his look, his surprise was not pleasurable. The woman surveyed them both with bright eyes as blue as Swift's own. Unlike him she was plainly pleased with the impression she had created. Her white teeth showed under her short upper lip. Energy flowed from her in waves.

Sheridan made a little awkward sound. The Dean nodded without looking in his direction. He moved a hand absently, as if to say yes, yes, now go. The young man said something, meant perhaps for an apology, and bowed to the lady, who returned his bow with a slight but distant smile. He left the room, closing the door on a silence which continued a moment more. Then the woman took a step forward.

"You know me, sir?" she said.

He did not move. "Mistress Van Homrigh," he said in a flat voice.

"And am I Vanessa no more?" she said. It was as though she had laughed, with a caressing note.

He said between his teeth, "I would not have you here for a thousand pounds. Nor for a hundred thousand."

"Oh la," she said. "You value my absence highly, sir." She curtsied again, spreading her skirts elaborately.

"Why have you come to Ireland, Vanessa?" he said, unrelaxing.

She held out both hands. "Did I not say I would follow you?" she said. There was a hint of appeal in her tone; she took a step towards him.

He turned his back on her, and said very bitterly, "You used to brag you were discreet. Where is it gone?" He sat down again in his chair, turned half away, presenting a hunched shoulder.

"Jonathan." She was hurt. "I thought you would be glad."

"Glad, glad," he said impatiently. "And if I am not glad, what?"

"I did not come to be chidden," she said. There were tears now in her fine eyes. She tossed her head resentfully. "I will not stay where I am not welcome."

He turned to her with a painful look. "Believe me," he said. "It goes to my soul not to be glad. But this is not London. You do not know the tattle of this nasty town."

"You once had a maxim," she said, reproachfully, "to act what was right, and not to mind what the world said."

"Right," he said. "Do you think this is right? Besides," he added sadly, "once I had many things I have not now. Youth, health, hopes, and powerful friends."

"Once I had a friend," she accused him, "that would see me sometimes, and either commend what I did, or advise me what to do."

"Foolish child," he said. "I am still your friend. Believe that. As for advice, I tell you this is madness to come here so."

"And why pray is it madness?" she asked vehemently. "Consider. I am a slave to uneasinesses, in a disagreeable place, among strange prying deceitful people. Do you think I wanted to come? Did I wish my mother dead?"

"Your mother?" he said slowly. "Dead?"

"Yes, dead," she said wildly. "Why else should I be here in Dublin? Now that I am alone——"

Her voice sped on, making more words, but in fact she was alone. London had him again; London of the good days, not long ago but as distant as Augustan Rome; London whose figures had now the shadowy greatness of the Augustans, those figures that had been his friends. His friends had been taken from him; now here was death to claim the smallest of them. The widow Van Homrigh, who had been not great, but kind; gone now, and her house gone, the warm house cold, the hearth grey, the voices and the laughter stilled. He had been at home

there, dined there, kept his wine there, had there a closet for his best cloak and wig, to change into on his way to court. All the little kindly graces of his London life had centred on that house and family, broken now and gone. He sighed.

"Hush, child," he said heavily, breaking in on her. "Do not talk so. I know your feeling, indeed I do—your mother was my friend also, God rest her. You must submit. Some degree of wisdom is required in the greatest calamity. God requires it. He knows what is best for us. He never intended anything like perfect happiness in this life."

"How you talk," she said, with a bright flash of scorn. "Submit, you say. And if I will not? No, you shall hear me. I come to take up my inheritance—is that so strange? I am ringed around with cunning executors, and importunate creditors of my mother's—is that my fault? Is it so strange, is it madness that I should turn to the one friend I have"—she caught her breath, biting her lip, and then went on—"I thought I had. Pray," she said in a forlorn cry, "what can be wrong in seeing and advising an unhappy young woman?"

Swift sprang to his feet. "I say you shall not talk so," he said violently. He put his hands on her shoulders and almost shook her. "You hurt yourself, and me more. I say I am your friend, and so I am. Sit down, and calm yourself." She freed herself impatiently, but all the same she sat down, putting her hand to her eyes. There was something like triumph in them. He went over to the fire. "I will give you the best advice and assistance I can," he said with no fervour. He kicked the burning coals with his foot, so that a burst of sparks rocketed up the chimney. "But you must use reason, be cool and sober. This is not a place for any freedom. Everything is known in a week, and magnified a hundred degrees by fools that——"

"And must we submit to fools?" she interrupted, looking up at his back. He shrugged. "They rule the world, my dear," he said.

"Oh," she said, on a long deep note. "You are changed, a prodigious change. This is not the Doctor Swift I knew, that strode over London like a colossus, to whom all men bowed, before whom all men trembled."

"It is true," he said tiredly.

"But I am not changed," she cried, "I warn you I am not.

I was never pious, and to suffer fools gladly is not in me. Nor will I suffer you to play fool with me. You say you are my friend. Sure we have been friends. But"—she stood up—"suppose I am not content with friendship now?"

He swung about, so that they faced each other. "Such talk is folly," he said quickly. Her eyes were level with his. She met his look full-faced.

"And why?" she asked boldly. "I am a woman, you are a man. Reason? What has reason to do between woman and man?"

He continued to eye her with a heavy unwavering look, as though he could turn her attack by that alone. She had caught him off guard. She had a trick of doing that, of slipping in under his defences and confronting him with the shining steel of her resolve, her determination to change not only their relationship but him, himself. In her mother's house he had begun by tutoring, and gone on to teasing. He had liked the sharp hoydenish wit of the sexless young creature she had been, her would-be grown-up graces had amused him. He had thought even to find another Stella. And then suddenly she had been grown-up indeed, a woman all fire, with a will to equal his own, unscrupulous to get her way, sexless no more; and dangerously close before he knew it. In his forced retreat from London his mind had been too full to dwell on their parting; at any rate he had admitted no relief. But he had written: I would not answer your questions for a million; nor can I think of them with any ease of mind. Adieu.

From then he had thought of her not at all, or fleetingly. The business had been finished, it was over, and maybe there was no relief in that. At any rate, no adieu was possible now. He looked at her heavily, and said at last, in a dull voice: "Providence intended it to govern our passions."

She was frankly contemptuous. "You talk like a school-master," she said.

"And how else should I talk?" he asked. "I am an old man, Vanessa——"

"You are not old to me," she broke in.

"I am an old man," he repeated. "I might be your father. If there were nothing else, that would forbid me to engage you."

"If there were nothing else?" she said.

"If I were not old, and inclined to be ailing; if I had money and you were the poorer by five thousand guineas; if——"

"If there were nothing else?" She interrupted the laborious catalogue. "I have heard——"

His brows drew down. She stopped. He said softly, "May I not hear what you have heard?"

She gave him a doubtful look, feeling the change in his manner, and said with obvious hesitation, "I have heard of two ladies——" She stopped again. His eyes were piercing. "When you frown so you terrify me," she protested, half laughing.

His fury burst over her. "And if you have heard of a hundred ladies, or ten hundred, or twenty, what then?" The tone was brutal. "Will you visit your tantrums on me, ma'am? I am no young raw scholar that for want of knowing company believes every silk petticoat includes an angel. I have no taste for love, nor yet any particular liking for your sex. Oh, I have sighed and languished, written, vowed, but for pastime only, or to show my wit. As for marriage, if I were a bull, I would mate with a cow in a byre, but being a man, I set my mind above my genitals and reason above gross desire. No, ma'am, time may take off from the lustre of virgins in all other eyes, but not in mine."

His fire struck fire in her: she forgot the two ladies, swung away from him, walking with a long free stride over to the window; swung again, and came back. She was magnificent in her rage, royal colour in her cheeks; her deep voice shook.

"Proud words," she said, "big, fine, cruel words. You think to cure me by cruelty, and bolster up yourself with pride. But you are mistaken, as I shall show you. I am a woman, with a heart to match your mind. Do not think I believe you. I believe you no more than you believe yourself. Never anyone living thought as you say you do. I know how you think. You made me"—she pointed at him accusingly—"you formed me, you are me, I am you. In loving you, I love myself. There's reason for you. Self-love: that's rational, is it not?" Her voice rose. "Is it not rational?" It broke on the last word. She had brought tears to her eyes with her own eloquence; now they overflowed. She made no effort to check them.

He said imploringly, "Vanessa!"

She seized her advantage. "You see," she said tearfully,

"you cannot see any human creature miserable, not even a woman, without being touched. And I am miserable, O how I am miserable." Her head drooped. "The love I bear you is not only in my heart," she said very low, "there is not a single atom of my frame that is not blinded with it." He made a sharp movement. "Don't speak," she said, "I must either unload my heart and tell you all its griefs, or sink under my inexplicable distress." She seemed almost to lean towards him; he turned away.

"I think you must often have wished me religious," she said forlornly, "for then I might have paid my devotions to heaven. But that would not spare you. Even if I were, still you'd be the deity I'd worship. What marks are there for a deity but what you are to be known by? You are present everywhere. Your image is always before my eyes. Sometimes you strike me dumb, I tremble with fear. Then pity shines in your eyes and revives my soul. What can I do but worship?"

Swift straightened himself abruptly. "I can bear no more," he said from his heart. "Vanessa, Vanessa, you were a child when I first knew you. I thought to teach you; now you would teach me. But I am too old to learn, and have no heart for the lesson either. You are wrong." There was a desperate sincerity and sadness in his voice. "I know you are wrong. I know too that the blame is mine, the grief and shame are mine, that you should think of me as you do. There is only one end. You must leave me and see me no more."

Finality and an utter weariness were in the words. She ignored them. "That I will not," she said crisply. She was not tired; it was as though she fed on emotion. "I will reclaim you——"

"No," he said.

"But I am set on it," she said. "I'll try every human art. I'll pester you with letters. Every day I'll be knocking at your door."

"No," he said deeply. "No. No."

"You know when I undertake anything I don't love to do it by halves," she said, with an almost complacent air, that had yet something callous in it. "Think calmly now. Is it not better to give way now, than to be brought to it by force?"

"You must not come here," he said. There was no more

force in him; it was surrender. "I'll—come to you." She gave him the point, lightly.

"And often?"

He sighed. "As often as I conveniently can. But secretly. It must be secretly." He paused, and then said as if to himself, "Gad, how I hate anything that looks like a secret."

"You do not hate me?" she said with an arch look.

"You know I do not," he said.

"Then that must be sufficient. It is not enough, but it will do for now."

He smiled faintly. "You are very determined," he said.

"You do not know how determined," she said with mock grimness. "You shall love me if I have to use the black art to encompass it."

"You are a white witch," he said, "and can do no mischief." He might have been asking for reassurance. "It is a pity your eyes are not black, or——"

"You would have paid me a compliment," she said gleefully.

"The pupil must pay respect to the master," he said.

"Say mistress, and I will go."

He shook his head. "You had better go now," he told her, "before your wit runs away with you. I cannot learn so fast."

"You are learning," she said, laughing. "Faster than you know." She stood up. "Good day to you, reverend Sir."

She left him. After a while he shivered. The room seemed very cold.

Chapter Four

His thoughts held him a long time. He sat on before the fire, leaning forward with elbows on knees, one hand clasped within the other. The heat of the fire burnt his skin, but went no deeper. He held himself rigid, as though braced against pressure, the pressure of time, the pressure of events, the inevitable unremitting pressure of mere living. It was an instinctive

attitude, like the gesture of a man to defend himself from a blow that has already reached his heart.

Reason and unreason, mind and heart, conflict never ending. Reason might bar the gate to pain, but always the heart unlatched the wicket and pain came in. A man might worship reason all his life, and never attain to the practice of it. Having a mind, he was capable of reason; having a heart, too, he was irrational and must suffer.

The Dean sat on before the fire, and with him sat the boy he had been, and the hot youth; the doctor, and the breaker of governments.

The boy had been kin to the whole world. He had no father, but a father's brother can be accepted as a father, and paid the respect of a son. The boy had felt kinship; he had been taught the meaning of charity, crudely given and then as casually denied. A bitter lesson for a boy, hard to learn.

So, then, the proud eager youth, conscious of his powers. No question of charity for him, no dependence on kinship. He had value of his own to give, service as well as love, loyalty as well as reverence. Ten years faithful service to Sir William Temple, that great gentleman, confidently asking nothing—and getting nothing.

And thus the Doctor, with a mind resolved to be done with penury, and another lesson still before him: that fame and fortune live in different worlds. The man of affairs, the friend of statesmen. After all his lessons, still feeling as well as thinking, still friend.

The last lesson, and he had learnt that too. He had loved Oxford and loved Bolingbroke. Fool, fool, fool that he was, he had stood with them in his heart as well as in his mind. He had seen them drift apart, his friendship and his heart split in two, knowing each loved him the less because he loved the other. And each had failed him. When Stella had said so he had denied it, the wound had been too recent, too raw. None the less it was true. They had failed him—because he had failed himself. He had been untrue to his hard-won creed, untrue to his resolution, untrue to his reason. Reason said, treat every man as a villain, Reason said, look only for ingratitude: where the debt is greatest, ingratitude pays best; of all men distrust the heaviest debtor. Reason said, beware of the heart, it will

betray you. And still, and still he had loved those two, God help him, loved them still.

And now Vanessa, with her what has reason to do between woman and man. What indeed? Contempt filled his mind as he sat there before the fire: contempt for himself, contempt for his weakness that could see danger but not avert it, contempt for man, whose reason was powerless to protect him from his silly foolish heart.

At last he sighed deeply, and moved; his body was stiff, his fingers ached, there were white marks on his left hand where his right had gripped it. A premonitory pulse throbbed in his ear, there was faint hint of nausea in his throat. He rose wearily, took his hat, and went out. His footsteps echoed booming through the vast empty house as he descended the stairs. He was only encamped in a corner of his predecessor's legacy: a rich man's mansion to live in, and he with not a penny but his emoluments as Dean and the income of his little living at Laracor. And with the expenses of installation still to meet, God knew how.

A flash of longing for Laracor took him as he closed the door behind him: for the canal he had dug, the willows he had planted, the fruit trees along the wall; the quiet of the bucolic life, where he might forget and be forgotten. Even as the thought came to him, he put it aside. It would not do, and he knew it. It was not for that he was made. He had wanted a bishopric, that had been the goal for which he had worked and striven; not for pecuniary advantage only. Poverty he knew and hated, the pinching, the little meannesses, the compulsion of the spirit that came from it. But no man thought less of riches: God obviously thought little of them, otherwise he would not have seen fit to bestow them on the men who had them. He wanted safety, the liberty to work without shackles on his wrists. He had seen himself as a prince of the Church, with the power that position gave, the power to plan wisely, to govern well. He had no doubt of his capacity to do that: he felt savagely that he had earned and more than earned the right to do it.

He had deserved well of the Church and of his country. For the Church of Ireland, in which he was ordained, he had wrung the first fruits from the Government of England. No other man

living could have done that, unknown and unsupported. For England—for England he more than any other single man had brought peace. His pen had found the public mind, formed it and moulded it. His pen had stopped the war, brought to an end the long dreary procession of Marlborough's victories, triumph after triumph, glory upon glory, blood, blood, blood. For him war was the last folly of which man was capable. No doubt, he had written, no doubt it will be a mighty comfort to our grandchildren when they see a few rags hung up in Westminster Hall which cost a hundred millions, to boast as beggars do that their grandfathers were rich and great. So he had struggled, written; his pen was at the service of the Church of which he was a servant; he wrote under no name, unpaid, asking nothing. Now the Queen was dead, the peace party out; the King was in, and with him the war Lords, to reap the benefits of peace, and cry traitor, traitor, at them that had got it.

Well, rot them for ungrateful dogs. He walked at his usual brisk pace, gown flying wide. There was a snap and a bite in the air unusual for Dublin. He found it tonic and invigorating. Walking was his panacea and his great pleasure. Now, feeling the blood begin to flow beneath his skin, legs moving steadily, feet planted solidly, one, two, one, two, his brain began to move again, positively not negatively, forward instead of round the weary circuit of regret.

He had not got his bishopric. Very well. With care, the revenues of the Deanery would meet his needs, personal and charitable. He would be a smart Dean, as his chapter should soon discover. No man should find him lacking in his duty, to the Church, to his cathedral, or to his people of the liberties. And if that duty brought him into conflict with authority—he had a shrewd idea that it would—so much the worse for authority.

Walking, he wore off his weariness. Thinking, he forgot his cares. Characteristically, he forgot Vanessa.

He had asked Sheridan to bring him Harding, the printer. He never hobnobbed with his printers, it was too dangerous. But he knew none in this city of Dublin, personally or by repute. He had to see the man, and weigh him. There was no help for it. Soundings need commit him to nothing.

What he would write, he had no idea, but he knew how, and

why, and with what object. Plainly, for the common man; in his own speech, so that he that could read might read to him that could not, in his own voice, and both understand. Because here was injustice, avarice, and stupidity; here was sloth, ignorance, and stupidity again, with wretchedness and misery. To castigate injustice, to crush avarice, to awaken sloth and illumine ignorance: but particularly to burn up stupidity in a great clean flame of rage. Stupidity he hated most of all: stupidity above, too dense to comprehend that injustice begot injustice, that the wretchedness of some paid dividends to none; stupidity below, too blind to see the remedy, shining plain.

Therefore he must write, coolly and clearly, damping down his own rage, stating first principles in the simplest terms, imaging in baby pictures the rewards of reason, and the penalties of its disregard. He knew all that without thinking of it, it was as much the framework of his mind as his bones were of his body. It was the facts of the matter in hand he had to get clear, the first principles.

The old woman, peeling her potatoes, like all her kind had them wrong. The drapiers won't buy, because they can't sell, she said. 'Tis the English Law, she said. True enough, it was the English Law, but operating differently from her idea of it. The English Law prohibited the exportation of woollens manufactured in Ireland. Greediness and stupidity were its roots: the English weavers looked with envious eyes upon the Irish trade with the northern nations, and France and Spain. Complaining of being undersold in commodities they did not themselves deal in, their clamour produced this law: henceforth raw wool only should be exported, and to England only. Thus Ireland lost her profitable northern trade. Did the English get it? Not they. They got bankrupted English weavers, returning home—those that did not go to France, Spain, and the Netherlands, where they taught the natives to be as good workmen as any in Ireland—or England.

Greediness and stupidity: the landlords, to whom the people of the country should have been able to look for succour, had no thought of responsibility. Their only concern was to live in and about London, to flock to court, to be lost in the crowd, kiss the King's hand, and take a view of the royal family. Wool, in spite of the ruinous restrictions, was the easiest and cheapest

product of which the land was capable, requiring no management, but only enclosure. Thus, land was enclosed, and thousands of poor wretches thought themselves blessed if they could obtain a hut worse than the squire's dog-kennel, and an acre of ground for a potato plantation, on condition of being as very slaves as any in America. The larger farmers, few as they were, were granted their land for a small term of years only, and discouraged from cultivating that land to the best advantage by the certainty of the rent being raised (on expiration of the lease) proportionably to the improvements they might make. Profits from the wool, rents from the farms, all went to England and were spent there.

Vanity and stupidity: the landlords' wives, their daughters, nay, every chambermaid, sempstress or tradesman's wife, in town and country, must needs be clad in English lace, English muslin, holland, cambric, or calico, in preference to stuffs woven in Ireland from Irish wool.

Raw wool, hides, skins, tallow, and beef went out; English manufactured goods came in, in value overbalancing them by far. By this means, and with the additional burden of rents remitted to England in specie and there spent, the nation was perpetually drained of its little running cash.

Thus far greediness, vanity, stupidity. The countryman wanted employment, the landlord was away; the shopkeeper wanted custom, the landlord was away; the farmer was fortunate if he could cover his family with a coarse homespun-frieze. Where did the weaver, the artisan, come out of all this? The drapier could not employ him, for the shopkeeper had no custom and could not buy. Nor could he get cheap food from the farmer, or how should the farmer pay his rent.

So Mother Macartney starved, and did not know why. She blamed the English law, and rightly. But behind that Law, there were greediness, vanity, stupidity; and behind Mother Macartney in her wretchedness was stupidity too, and sloth and ignorance.

And in her own hands, the remedy.

There was an open space at the end of the street down which he walked, a crossing where the jostling houses drew back. Now a crowd filled it, men and women, shouting and laughing; about

their feet the usual scum of wizened dirty children, squalling, crying, and laughing, too, in imitation of their elders. He came to a halt and watched them. These were his people. This was the flock of which he was shepherd, this the army whom he should lead to battle. The expression on his face was not pleasant; there was in it neither love nor compassion. He hawked in his throat and spat into the gutter. Taking a handkerchief from his pocket, he put it to his nose.

As he did so, the crowd parted a little and he saw, between them, the cause of their gathering. At the centre, ringed about, was a common sight in Dublin city, the inevitable product of continued want, an idiot. The poor creature was pleased with the attention paid him; he danced a kind of shuffling jig, like a captive bear. He was almost naked. As he danced he was stripping off the remainder of the filthy rags that covered his lank body, and pressing them upon those nearest to him. The crowd laughed at this comic spectacle; they took the idiot's offerings and gave him in exchange stones, garbage, bits of stick, which he accepted with every appearance of satisfaction. At each renewed shout he danced the harder, so that his arms and legs looked as though they would fly off from his trunk. He breathed with a whistling sound, mouth open. Sweat streamed from him.

Swift took it in, the whole exhibition of cruelty and folly. Then, with half a grunt, half a groan, and no gentleness, he began to push his way through the mob. They fell back before him, and as he reached the middle, became suddenly still. Only the idiot went on dancing, but uncertainly, missing the applause.

The Dean looked round him. His eyes, under the black brows, were bright with contempt. Imperceptibly the space about him grew wider. When the silence had become intolerable, he spoke softly.

"You dogs," he said. "You dolts. Where are your hearts? Or have you none? Would you laugh at a man with a broken head?" He paused. In the quiet the idiot's feet whispered on the cobbles. He went on in a louder tone. "Why then must you jeer at a cracked brain? Can this pitiable thing help his misfortune?" He breathed deeply. "Begone, you dirt, you filth, begone, I say, and thank God upon your knees that you are not as he."

The crowd began to disperse. The idiot looked after them. He shambled a few steps, this way and that way. He threw back the long pale hair from his eyes, and mouthed indistinguishable words, mewling and whining. His crazed mind decided that Swift was responsible for this, this damping of the spirit of jollity, this banishment of fun. Picking a stick from the pile he had collected, he advanced on him, gesticulating threats.

The Doctor stood his ground. He said nothing, but gazed on the man sternly. Something in his face brought the idiot to a stop; he hesitated, dangling the stick in a loose hand, swinging his head from side to side. At last, with a petulant movement, he broke the stick in two and threw the pieces to the ground. He sat down on the kerb and put his head in his hands, whimpering. Swift walked on, more slowly, in deep thought.

Sheridan came two nights after, bringing Harding with him. The printer was a little round man, round-faced and round-eyed. From his rosy cheeks to the shiny steel buckles on his shoes he was the embodiment of self-satisfaction and good-humour, a little dimmed now by his sense of the august company in which he found himself, but still beaming forth like a lantern-flame on a foggy night. Sheridan presented him formally.

"Dr. Swift, this is Mr. Harding, a neighbour of yours in St. Francis Street, and the best printer in Dublin. Mr. Harding, the Dean."

Harding muttered, "Your Honour's servant," looked as if he could have found it in him to turn and run, and encompassed an awkward little bow. Swift ignored him.

"Dr. Sheridan," he said in his crispest tone, "this levity becomes you poorly."

"Levity?" Sheridan said, quite bewildered. "I don't——"

The Dean cut him short. "I thought you were to present to me a printer," he said.

"So I was," Sheridan cried. "This is he—Mr. Harding, of St. Francis Street."

Swift turned his full gaze on Harding. The little man quivered.

"A printer?" Swift said. "This? I never knew a printer that was not a hang-dog, lean and ill-favoured, smirched with ink, and reeking of his trade. This is no printer."

"Indeed I am that, sir," Harding found his voice, a reedy pipe at all odds with his appearance. "Dr. Sheridan speaks truly. I am Harding of St. Francis Street, at the Sign of the Pelican, and your Honour's humble servant."

"You astound me," Swift said. "But I take it I must believe you." He extended a hand. "I am happy to know you, sir. Be seated, pray." Harding glowed. They drew up chairs beside the fire. "You will drink a glass of wine, I hope? And you, Doctor Sheridan. Will you not pour a glass for Mr. Harding and yourself?"

Harding cleared his throat painfully. "Dr. Swift, sir," he said. "I never thought to have the honour of sitting by your Honour's fireside, nor the privilege of knowing you. I am a plain man, sir——"

"You talk like a courtier," Swift said.

"Nay, but that is what I am not," Harding said. "I am but a poor printer, and as such I have read your writings, and——"

"Mine?" Swift said. "I think you have me wrong, Mr. Harding. I never writ so much as a pamphlet in my life. A sermon or two perhaps, but no more."

"But——" Harding said, and swallowed. "But every man knows Dr. Swift, and the Tale of a Tub, and the Conduct of the Allies, and the Examiner, and the New Journey to Paris, and——" Swift eyed him grimly. "I had even hoped," he went on uncertainly—"some small commission——"

"What every man knows," Swift said, "is too often the babble of fools, Mr. Harding. You should give it no credence. No, you must look to Grub Street for your hacks, not to the Deanery. Besides, though I am not acquainted with all the works you mentioned, surely some of them are of a dangerous inflammable nature. It would be doing you but an ill turn, sir, who have never done me harm, to saddle you with some of those, or like them."

"I think you're joking with me, sir," Harding began.

Swift frowned.

"Saving your Honour's presence," Harding said hastily. "But joking or not, I should take it as an honour to have printed any one of those pieces, I do assure you."

Swift looked at him with some curiosity. "You are an intrepid printer," he said.

Harding flushed. "I think well of my trade, sir," he said proudly.

"I see you do," Swift said. "Nevertheless, I did not ask Doctor Sheridan to bring you here to talk of it. He has spoken of you often as a solid man, of a good understanding. As one but newly come here, I am anxious to bring myself level with affairs, and could think of no better than yourself to instruct me."

"Sure your Honour knows more of affairs than I do," Harding said.

"Not I," Swift said. "I hear nothing. I see no one. I live a country life in town. In short, I think I am the only man in this kingdom who is not a politician. Therefore, tell me the news."

"Well," the printer said. "The talk of Dublin is last week's wool shipment—under the noses of the revenue boys too—but your Honour won't wish to hear of that."

"Indeed I do," Swift said. "Go on."

"It was last Thursday night," Harding said. "A fine moony night, if you mind it. They say four hundred and fifty bales set sail for Spain, from the docks of Dublin itself. Maybe the officers' eyes are not good. Maybe a cloud—of corruption—came between them and the moon."

Swift drew in his cheeks.

"However that may be," Harding went on, "they say now that His Excellency the Viceroy is returning to stamp out this plague of smuggling, and with orders to show no mercy."

"Mercy?" Swift said. "Of course he must show none. What worse crime is there than an objection to starvation? 'Tis no better than treason. But, thank God, there are yet some loyal subjects among us, that will starve to death and still be happy in the opportunity. Listen, gentlemen, and I will tell you a parable."

"The other day I saw an idiot in the streets, not a mile from the Deanery house. The miserable wretch was dancing for the diversion of the crowd. They enjoyed it—and so did he. As he danced he took off his rags and presented them to his audience, and in return they gave him sticks and stones, which he took for treasure, not knowing, poor fool, that he would have got the stones in any event. Only if he had not danced they would have flung them at him. And when I intervened in his pro-

tection, he almost flung them at me." He paused, and then went on:

"There is a true and faithful picture. Have you skill enough, I wonder, to tell me which was which, which England and which Ireland, the mob or the fool?"

Harding stood up. "By God, sir," he said, his high voice higher still. "That was spoken like a true Irishman."

"I give you the Irishman back in your teeth," Swift said fiercely. "I am no Irishman. I happened to be dropped here, and was a year old before I left it, and to my sorrow did not die before I came back to it. Must I therefore be kin to the idiot?"

"I'll not argue," Harding said, undismayed in his enthusiasm. "Sure 'twas spoken like a true man, Irish, English or Chinese. I'm for you, Doctor Swift, and you may be what race you please."

"I'll wish you a good night, sir," Swift said, with no softening of tone. "And you, Doctor Sheridan. You may take away your printer."

"I will go, sir," said Harding, "but I cannot think I have offended you. Moreover, I'd have you know you cannot offend me. I'm your man, Mr. Dean, one Irishman at your service. I am glad and proud to know you. A good night to you, Doctor."

As they went through the door, Swift called Sheridan back.

"Thomas Sheridan," he said. "No. Not a word from you. But I like your little Irishman. Good night, Tom."

Chapter Five

The face of the countryside was closed and sullen in the bleak half-light of evening. A faint mist lay across the marshy fields and over the river, which was as still as a lake, showing no trace of any current. The further bank was almost indistinguishable through the haze. The air held the soft

flavour of peat-smoke, but there was no glimmer of fire, no sign of life, no sound; no sound but the slap-slap of the horses' hooves on the muddy track.

The Dean and his two servants rode in single file, first a servant, then the Dean, then a servant. They maintained a steady trot, calculated to bring them home before darkness fell. They had dined badly at an inn out towards Howth. The Dean had ordered food, and a half pint of wine; eaten; paid what was asked; remounted and ridden off; all without an unnecessary syllable and almost without lifting his eyes to look about him. If he had heard a word of the conversation in the parlour of the inn, he had not shown it. His expression had been unmoved. He had chewed carefully, and left without haste, just as he was now riding without haste; the two servants jogging along the well-known road, half asleep, as they did nearly every day, the Dean between them, half asleep too.

He was thinking drowsily that the two men should have carried pistols. He was thinking of London, of the time when he had been forced to the expense of a hackney-coach to carry him home at nights, because of his dread of being ambushed from some dark alley and found the next morning, like a tumbled and discarded scarecrow in wig and gown, lying across a gutter. He had never been attacked, but he had played a dangerous game, and had no reason to believe that his enemies would abide by the weapons of his choosing, the weapons of the study, pen and ink. He had no fear, except of indignity. But that he did fear as deadlier than death. Man as Nature made him was physically as well as mentally too vulnerable to ridicule to court it; so, in London he took a coach, and now he wished his men were armed, though he would not force his pace by so much as a step.

There had been by-play in the inn parlour—two young men warm with liquor, and some pointing, and some stifled laughing, not too stifled not to be noticeable. He had chosen not to notice it, and had left them to their wit. Perhaps they would be satisfied with that; perhaps not. He was disposed to think not.

For two days a pamphlet had been on sale in the bookshops and on the streets of Dublin, issued from the Pelican in St. Francis' Street, and entitled "A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufactures." The name of the author was not given.

The pamphlet itself was modest in form and reasonable in matter. Its tone was mild, its language clear and sober. There was little about its quiet anonymity to suggest violence, nothing to suggest that violence might be offered to a reverend doctor, trotting staidly homeward in the dusk. The doctor himself was not under any delusion on the subject. He was the last man to underrate himself; his words were apt to burn in the minds of those that read them, and he knew it. He expected trouble. His thoughts dwelt on the two young men: innocent roysterers, or——

Somebody shouted, a long way off. The sound came clearly, but small and soft, minimized by distance. The man in the rear rode up level with the Dean, who eyed him sideways with a surly look. The man touched his hat.

"Your Honour," he said, jerkily. "There's a shouting away behind us——" His hand dropped, his voice tailed off.

The Dean rode on.

"I thought—maybe——" the man said.

"Did you think I called you, sirrah?" Swift said. "No? Then fall behind. When I want your discourse you shall know it."

The man dropped back, abashed. They rode on as before. The noise was nearer now: a series of view-halloas, and the notes of a hunting horn. The leading servant began to glance behind, over his shoulder. Each time he did so the Dean could see the white blob of his face, like a peeled turnip. He concentrated all his attention, and all his growing irritation, on those intermittent flashes of pallid stupidity. His fingers itched to be about the man's ears. He took a tighter grip on the reins, and the distance between him and the other widened.

Meanwhile their pursuers were coming up rapidly, laughing, hallooing, and blowing wild calls on the horn, so that the horse of the second servant began to dance along, edging up imperceptibly beside Swift, and infecting his own mount with its excitement. He sat stolidly, holding to his steady trot, shoulders squared and eyes forward. The head of the servant's horse came up to his knee; he could see the white of its eye, staring, a distended nostril. He said without turning his head, spitting the words out: "Back, you dog. Get back." The man fell away again. The shouting rose to a still higher pitch, there

was a scuffle of hooves, a splashing, and a cry cut short as man and horse went into the river. He rode on, reining in hard, still not looking behind.

"Dolts," he said aloud, to the road before him. "Insolent dogs." He was resolved not to turn, not to waver, to present through all odds only an immovable back. The pursuit had slackened for a moment, possibly to observe the man struggling to the bank. Now they came on again, the hoof beats mingled with a continuous unidentifiable grinding, and so near that he expected at any breath to be run down and trampled in the mud. Then one of the oncoming horses touched his on the flank, or it took fright, or one of the shrieking riders used his whip on it. It reared violently, almost unseating him, got the bit in its teeth, and in a second was away down the road as though death and damnation were at its heels.

A hideous outcry went up. The horse, beyond all control, leapt forward in a series of enormous bounds, swerving from side to side, first towards the river, then to the landward side, which at this place rose sharply in a steep bluff. At each swerve the pursuers yelled the louder, the horn blared. The Dean braced himself in the saddle. His mind had room for one conscious thought only: pistols. If only his men had had pistols. For a brief flash he wondered what had become of the foremost man. Then no thought remained, only effort, effort that set his teeth, tore at his arms, brought sweat out on his forehead. The pace became gradually less headlong. He had momentarily outdistanced the chase and had time to look about him. If he could find a cut-out in the bank, any space to stand without being overrun. He was no longer concerned to present his back to the enemy. His anxiety now was to turn and face them. But now, when he would, he could not. He had to keep on.

Then, as a kind of shallow ditch took shape under the bank, he saw his chance. With no thought of the risk, he leapt his horse, still at a hand gallop, into it, and pulled to a halt. He waited.

Not for long. A light chaise swept out of the gathering dusk. It came to a standstill on the edge of the ditch, the two horses quivering. They breathed snortingly, in unison; a light steam rose from them. Swift found himself looking up into the flushed faces of two young men. They grinned down at him, happily.

He took a deep breath, but before he could speak, the driver said loudly:

"Egad, Dick, I owe you a guinea. 'Tis a man indeed. And yet I would have sworn it was a fox. Man never ran so—swift, before."

They both laughed. Swift said nothing: his horse tossed its head uneasily.

"And yet it cannot speak," the young man said. "Or can it? Think you, Dick, if I touched it with my whip, it would give tongue?"

He moved the whip suggestively. Swift said slowly: "I know you, my lord."

The young man crowed with delight. "It can," he said. "It can talk like a Christian."

"I know you very well," Swift said again. "The last time we met, if I remember, there was also the question of my Christian virtues between us. But then," he said contemptuously, "a favour taken is a different thing from a favour asked."

The young man flushed deeper. He dropped his tone of raillery, and said stiff-necked, "You have the advantage of me, sir."

"Aye, so I have," Swift said. "So I have, now as then. Then, my name served you as a key to Mr. Secretary Addison's chamber. Now it serves you for an easy pun. Then I showed you my generosity. Now you show me yours. I have no doubt where the advantage lies, my lord Blaney."

Blaney's companion broke in roughly. "Must we argue all night because he has your name?" he said. "What odds if he has the whole peerage of Ireland at his tongue's tip? Do we duck him or do we not?"

"Soft, soft," Blaney said. "Leave him to me. I am a lover of form, and therefore I tell him now, softly, he lies. Next I ask, did he or did he not write, the other day, a damned, infamous, seditious, canting pamphlet, insulting the Church, the Army, and the peers of this kingdom, and inciting the common people to rebel?"

He paused. "You are drunk, sir——" Swift said.

"You lie again," Blaney said.

"—and therefore I pass over the insult to my cloth," he went on. "But I warn you——"

"Quiet, old man," Blaney said. "Your sermon is for Sunday. Mine is for now. But first you shall hear my text, which is taken from that same traitorous epistle before-mentioned. Listen." He took from the pocket of his coat a paper, and with some difficulty and stumbling, because of the fading light, read:

"I would now expostulate a little with our country landlords; who, by unmeasurable screwing and racking their tenants all over the kingdom, have already reduced the miserable people to a worse condition than the peasants in France or the vassals in Germany or Poland; so that the whole species of what we call substantial farmers will in a very few years be utterly at an end. I have heard great divines affirm that nothing is so likely to call down a universal judgement from heaven upon a nation as universal oppression; and whether this be not already verified in part, their worships, the landlords, are now at full leisure to consider. Whosoever travels this country, and observes the face of Nature, or the faces and habits and dwellings of the natives, will hardly think himself in a land where law, religion, or common humanity is professed."

He looked up, and spat over the side of the chaise. "There," he said. "If that is not sedition, what is it? My blood boils to read it."

"Well," Swift said. The sound of his own words had gone far to restore his good humour. "As to sedition, I am no judge. Politics is not for my profession. As for the writing of it, the style is clear, the argument strongly reasoned. By my recollection, however, you have omitted in the reading a cogent part of the author's——"

"Ah," Blaney broke in, "so you have read it?"

"What is good enough for your lordship's reading," Swift said, "is surely good enough for mine."

Blaney swore. "I'll stake my soul you wrote it too, you damned hypocritical Jacobite," he said.

"Oh God," the other man said. "Do we duck him or not?" He yawned, and added inconsequentially, "I'm cold."

"The air is cold," Swift agreed. "None the less, I am warm, and growing warmer. I have but three things to say. First, the author of that treatise with which you have been so obliging as to pursue me, implies, I believe, that the landlords of Ireland

are themselves no less slaves than the meanest inhabitant, and that it is the natural disposition of slaves to be tyrants. He is, in fact, as ready to excuse as to accuse. Second, quoting scripture as the devil will, he says (if my memory does not fail me), oppression makes a wise man mad; and consequently speaking, the reason why some men are not mad is because they are not wise. From there he goes on to wish that oppression would in time teach a little wisdom to fools. That, my lord, is a kind and pious hope with which I heartily concur. Third——” and here his voice swelled to its full compass, so that his horse tugged at the bridle and half turned about——“third, I would have you know that I had two servants with me, and that the foremost, my vanguard, was armed. He lies at this moment snugly ensconced at the top of this bank with a pistol in either hand. Therefore I say, be off. I am weary of you.”

The two young men's heads revolved as one to peer up into the darkness.

“I can see nothing,” the cold one said to Blaney after a moment.

“Nor I,” Blaney said. “’Tis a trick. Damn you,” he said to Swift, “do you threaten us? Is not the road as free for us as for you?” His change of tone was comic. “As for pistols,” he turned sharply, “are you there, Tom?”

A mounted servant, till now unseen, edged up to the chaise.

“My lord,” he said.

“Is the pistol loaded with ball?”

“It is, my lord,” the servant said. He took a pistol from a saddle holster by his knee, and handed it across to Blaney.

“You see?” Blaney said to Swift. “How now then?”

“O pray, my lord,” Swift said mockingly, “do not shoot. My horse is apt to start, and I am no horseman. My life might be endangered. And then there is my servant, a most nervous man. His pistols, too, might——”

“God rot your smooth tongue,” Blaney burst out. He stopped, at a loss for words. Then, taking up the whip, he lashed at the horses, and vanished into the murk, with the servant Tom spurring furiously behind.

Swift dismounted heavily, and leaned against the bank for a time with his eyes closed.

* * * * *

Stella was at the Deanery when he arrived, weary and bedraggled, and an hour later than was his custom.

"Yes, yes," he said to her questioning. "I have a story to tell indeed. But not a word shall you hear till Tom Sheridan comes. Not a word, madam, though you plague me on your knees. I must have Sheridan. But first of all I will see my two knaves. Pray send them to me."

The two servants, who had fallen in shamefacedly behind him during the journey home, and to whom so far he had said not one word, came into the room. He sat with his hands on his knees and looked them up and down.

"Soh," he said. Their feet moved uneasily. They gazed earnestly at the floor. "One wet and one dry. But both villains." They said nothing. "You hear me, sirrahs," he bawled suddenly. "Both villains, I say, born for the halter." He rose, and walked round them, slowly. "Sturdy rascals, both," he said as if to himself. "The limbs of the sons of Anak, but the two hearts between them less than one chicken's. What shall it be, the whip or the stocks?" He paused, facing them. "Which, I say? Come now, choose. Quickly. You, Robert Blakely, which for you?"

The wet man lifted his head. "The whip, sir," he said quietly. "But——"

"What's this?" Swift said. "But? But what, you lout?"

"I will take my whipping, sir," Blakely said. "I only meant to say, I had no thought of leaving your Honour. I am no rider, sir. My horse stumbled and threw me into the river, and then came after me. When I climbed out, your Honour was gone, and I thought I should save the horse. It took me a long time to fetch him to the shore. The bank was steep," he ended simply.

"So," the Dean said. "Here's a plausible knave." He stared into the man's face consideringly. "You will take your whipping then?"

"Yes, sir," Blakely said.

Swift swung about. "And you, hangdog," he said to the other. "What do you choose?"

This man wriggled. He looked about him desperately. "Your reverence——" he said at last. He moistened his lips and swallowed convulsively.

"Well? Well?" Swift said. "Speak up. And tell me not you are no rider. You—a groom. Come, man, whip or stocks?"

"I——" the man said. "I'll take—the stocks, your Honour." He glanced at the Dean out of the corners of his eyes.

"Ah," Swift said. He walked slowly to the fire, and spat into it. He turned. "You may go, both of you. I will consider the matter."

The two men made for the door.

"You, Robert," he called after them. The man stopped, and came back. "I have an errand for you. You will run at once to Doctor Sheridan's house. You know it?"

"Yes, sir," Blakely said.

"You will go there, at once, and tell him I wish to see him without delay. I say at once. Now. If you are cold, you will run the faster. And no stopping at the ale-house. You hear me."

"Yes, sir," the man said.

"Then go."

The door closed behind him. The Dean rubbed his hands together.

Sheridan came soon. He found Swift awaiting him, changed, and resplendent in his best wig, his eyes bright. Stella, too, on edge with impatience. The Dean had held to his word and said nothing. Rebecca Dingley sat plumply in her usual corner, busy with her silks and needles.

The young man burst into the room as if driven by the wind.

"Dr. Swift," he cried, before he was well inside the door. "What's this? What's this I hear, this—outrage?" He recollected himself. "Ladies, I beg your pardon. I am most upset. Your servant, Mistress Johnson. Your servant, ma'am." He turned to Swift again, who had been watching him with unconcealed amusement, sucking in his cheeks. "Your servant comes a-knocking at my door, dripping with water and panting like a foundered horse, full of some wild tale of footpads, and the river, and much more I could not make out, and——" He stopped. "You are safe?" he said incredulously, and broke out laughing, at himself, so that Stella laughed too, and Dingley looked up and smiled.

"Quite safe, Tom," Swift said. "And sorry too—to have been the cause of so much concern. I sent the dog wet as he was, as punishment to him, and with no thought of you."

"Say no more, I beg you," Sheridan said. "'Twas my own fault. I would not stay to listen to him, though he ran behind me, puffing in my ear, all the way."

"He is a stout knave, Master Robert," Swift said. "As for his mate, you shall find me another groom, Tom, as good as he. But it was not for that I wanted you. There is that on hand, that Harding must be warned of, as soon as maybe. Listen to me."

He told his story. "And so I outfaced a pair of puppies," he concluded. "Though my heart was in my boots. I am as nice as the next man, still I confess I had no relish for the river. I could feel it cold upon my skin. I shiver still, only at the thought of it. But my lord Blaney and his watery-minded friend were but the leaders of the pack. There is more to come. I am assured of it. Harding must be warned."

"Well, that is easy," Sheridan said. "But still I do not see——"

"You are a child, Thomas," Swift said. "Whereas I—I have grown old in these transactions. Harding must be warned, 'tis he they will have at next. They cannot fasten it on me: this was their only hope, to shock it out of me. They failed, and moreover I have a plan that will set all Dublin laughing at the attempt. Now the next move is against the printer: to endeavour to affright him into betraying me. There you have it: that was my interest in his loyalty."

"He will not betray you," Sheridan said.

"No, I do not think he will," Swift said. "But he will be hard pressed. They called me Jacobite, Tom, the puppies, yelping, and thereby gave away more than they knew. Cry treason, and a stink is raised to make any man hold his nose and shut out all lesser smells together. Cast filth to hide filth, that's the plan. And so the puppies yelp, and after them comes the pack, yowling and howling, yahooping at our heels. Yahooping—that hits it off—a good word. But I shall master them, these—Yahoos."

Chapter Six

He petitioned the House of Lords in Dublin for protection against Blaney in terms so meek, so humble, as to give that lordling the appearance of a lion that hunts mice; so that even those of the young man's own party, meeting him, could not help pleading, in assumed terror: "O pray, sir, do not shoot." The phrase became a catchword, and Blaney retired to the country.

Meanwhile, the pamphlet, as well as the petition, circulated widely. Harding ran off a second printing. It was bought by all who could read, and applauded by all who bought, except those who had employments under the government or were expectants. These were the vocal public; their howling was loud enough, it seemed, to reach the sky. But there was no move against Harding, yet.

In the first furious despair of his return, Swift had said his head was not worth the cutting off. He had not believed it then. Now it was shown to be false. The new ministry in London, feeling its feet, was determined to hunt down and destroy all those in any way dangerous to it. Who more dangerous than Dr. Swift? Although the new pamphlet was not openly attributed to him, every dirty art, every refinement of calumny, was employed against him. It was put round that he had fled to Dublin to avoid arrest and impeachment for treason. Erasmus Lewis wrote, over no signature, warning him to destroy any papers which might be used for the purposes of incrimination. His letters were seized and opened. The mob were incited against him; he went everywhere accompanied by Robert Blakely bearing a cudgel.

Any little pimping upstart who conceived it to be to his advantage with those now in power, or who got from it an easy gratification to his self-esteem, took opportunity to exhibit his manly contempt for the fallen. Sir Thomas Southwell, one of

the commissioners of the revenue, and a friend and protégé of many years, answered his greeting one day in Sackville Street with a cold stare. "I'll lay you a groat, Mr. Dean," he said insolently, "I do not know you at all," and turned his back. Swift looked after him fixedly; he said nothing.

He still rode every day, for his health's sake, but now his men were armed. Apart from that he seldom left the bounds of the Kevin Bail, inside which he was chief magistrate, landlord and master. He busied himself with his charity, and Mrs. Brent's recommendations. He set about the subjugation of his cathedral chapter, "of three-and-twenty dignitaries and prebendaries, whereof the major part, differing from me in principles, have taken a fancy to oppose me on all occasions in the chapter-house." When the opportunity arose, he struck out, reminding the Bishop of Meath, who also was of the other party: "I hope your lordship will please to remember that you are to speak to a clergyman, and not to a footman." He saw Stella each afternoon, opened his house to any that cared to come, two evenings in every week; and revolved in his mind a project conceived many years ago, in London, of a book of fictitious and satirical travels which should paint the world as it was. He waited. In spite of everything he still believed that Harding was the next in line.

Meanwhile, there was Vanessa. Always, in the deeps of his spirit, under the preoccupations of every day, Vanessa; a dark shadow of unease. Since the day she came to the Deanery, he had not seen her; apparently, for all her challenge, she had taken his words to heart. But though she did not come herself, letters came, letters, letters, letters. "What can I do?" she wrote. "It is now long weeks since I saw you; and in all that time I have never received but one letter from you, and a little note with an excuse. Oh! have you forgot me?"

And again: "Put my passion under the utmost restraint; send me as distant from you as the earth will allow; yet you cannot banish those charming ideas which will ever stick by me while I have the use of memory. Therefore do not flatter yourself that separation will ever change my sentiments. I find myself unquiet in the midst of silence, and my heart is at once pierced with sorrow and love. For heaven's sake, tell me what

has caused this prodigious change in you which I have found of late."

Unquiet in the midst of silence. He would wake in the night and find those words beating about his mind like caged birds. He replied, sometimes, but when he did, his letters were not changed; they were as they had always been, rallying, jovial. They did not even admit a change in her. "One would think you were in love, by dating your letter so that I received it just a month before it was written. You do not find that I answer your questions to your satisfaction: prove to me first that it was ever possible to answer anything to your satisfaction, so that you would not grumble in half an hour. I am glad my writing puzzles you, for then your time will be employed in finding it out: and I am sure it costs me a great many thoughts to make my letters difficult." Only at the end he wrote: "I wish your letters were as difficult as mine, for then they would be of no consequence if they were dropped by careless messengers." And to spoil all: "It is I who ought to be in a huff, that anything written by me should be difficult to you."

Vanessa. Little Vanessa, the pretty child to whom he had paid mock court, abetting her mother's spoiling. Hussy's beau, they had called him. Pretty Vanessa. Dark, imperious, passionate Vanessa now. But seeing still the pretty child, he could not bring himself to hurt her. He could not. However he tried, softness crept in.

On a day in spring, he went to see her. He rode weighted down with misgivings, not willingly, but because he could withstand her entreaties no longer. She should never have come to Ireland, and yet in justice he could not blame her. Her mother's death, her property in Ireland, left her no choice. Her feelings towards himself he had not foreseen; he should have foreseen them. He was so much the elder, so old, so very old, and she so young.

He rode towards Kildrought, Selbridge as the English called it, chin on breast. The fresh green of the spring, the limpid shining day, was clouded in his sight. He entered her house frowning; he frowned on her excitement at his coming.

"At last," she said. Her eyes sparkled, she seemed hard put to it to avoid tears. "At long, long last you are here."

"I am here," he said.

"I——" she began, and stopped. She looked at him doubtfully, rather pathetically. She decided not to say what she had begun to say. "Then now you must see my house," she said instead. "But first, before the house, the garden—you are not weary from the ride?" Her tone changed again, as though she were not sure of him after so great a time, not sure of herself. "You would not sooner rest?"

"No, no," he said ungraciously. "Let us see the garden."

"Come, then," she said. She stepped out through the long windows, looking back at him to follow. They crossed a lawn in silence, and she preceded him along a path between bushes bright with new leaf. At the end she stopped. "There," she said. "Is it not beautiful?"

He looked out over a wide prospect. The ground fell away before them in a gentle slope, at the foot of which the quiet river flowed, dazzling in the sun. A little stream chuckled its way contentedly downwards. The air was warm and full of peace.

"Is it not beautiful?" she said again.

"It is not very grand," he said.

"No," she said. "But then I do not much love grandeur. It is a good place to think. I am here a great deal, and think of a great many things. Here you may picture me, if you ever——" She broke off abruptly. He said nothing. "This is my arbour," she went on in a moment. "Will you not sit a little while? I have something to do."

He sat down on a wooden seat, over which the branches of several trees had been trained together to make a shade. He watched her while she got from a box under the trees a small trowel and a pruning knife. She cut a slip from one of the laurel bushes growing by the path, and trimmed it at the end. She dug a little hole in the ground, planted the slip of laurel, put back the earth, and pressed it down.

She came back to him with a flushed face. "There," she said. "That is a rite you have witnessed. I promised myself, that each time you came, I would plant a laurel to remember it by. I had thought to have a whole forest of laurels. Instead——" She spread out her hands in a pretty gesture.

He leaned forward. "Vanessa," he said. "Why will you not——?"

"You would like some coffee?" she interrupted him. "You would, would you not? You remember my coffee?"

He gave a sigh that sounded like a groan. "I remember it," he said almost in a whisper. "Yes, I remember. That, and more besides—too much, I think. Much that would be better forgotten."

"Must I forget that I was happy once?" she said quietly.

"Why can you not be happy now?" he retorted. "You talk of change, but I am not changed. I am what I am, what I have always been. It is you who are different. You are a woman, not a girl——"

"I loved you then," she said, "and I love you now."

He ignored her. "You must see that this—this girl's fancy, if persisted in, can only have one end——"

"If you will not love me," she said, very low, "it can have only one end. You will kill me."

"Love, love, love," he burst out violently. "What is it this love you prate about? Have you no sense, that you set up the bubble of a moment's satisfaction of the body to be worth more than the honest esteem of years? The bubble bursts, and leaves nothing but a dirty taste upon the tongue. What have you then? Nothing—not love, not friendship—nothing."

"That is not love," she said.

"No?" he said. "I believe it is not. But it is love when passion is brought in to soil it."

"Passion would not soil my love for you," she said.

He made an impatient movement. "You do not know what you speak of," he said. "I tell you now in plain words that it is not for me. I will not submit to it. If you insist, it is you who will kill the love I bear you and have always borne you."

She was silent.

"Vanessa," he said urgently. "Why will you not forget me? There is only unhappiness for you, regrets for me——"

"I cannot forget you," she said steadily. "You are the air I breathe."

"You could forget," he said. "There is a way. Vanessa, why do you not—marry?"

She lifted her head and stared at him. He met her eyes for a moment, and then looked away, down at his feet.

"It is a way," he repeated, stubbornly. "I would not expect

any—I do not expect you to think as I do. But if you could find—I know many worthy men whose friendship you could enjoy. And then perhaps in the course of time——”

She continued to look at him, dumbly, with a painful expression that stopped the words in his throat.

“Child, child,” he cried, “this is for your good and mine, too, believe me. Only take the advice I give you and you will see that it is so.”

“You are very wise, are you not,” she said, and sighed. “You know so much——”

“I know myself,” he said.

“But you do not know me,” she said.

“I am but using reason,” he said as if in entreaty. “Will you not at all events try my way? If I am wrong, then I am wrong, and there is an end to that. But I am not wrong. For your own sake——”

She shrugged her shoulders.

“Then for mine.”

“What must I do?” she asked drearily.

He took a breath. “Go out more. See more company. Moping here alone you grow splenetic and full of imaginations. Get yourself a horse, and ride to visit your neighbours. And if you should meet a personable young gentleman, smile, and be kind. He will like you, and you will like yourself the better, and so the spleen will vanish, and make room for something more comfortable.”

She smiled faintly. “And you will be free of me at last,” she said. “But I shall never be free of you. No, let me speak. I will ride, I will visit, I will smile, I will even laugh if it will please you. But wherever I go, whatever I do, you will be all I think of, your voice will be all I hear. It is too late to alter. If you renounce me, if you will not at least see me sometimes, I may laugh, but I shall die all the same.”

He gazed down at the gentle river. He did not see it. Another bleaker landscape, the dark country of his mind, filled his vision. His eyes were empty. “You are too young to talk so much of dying,” he said in a low tone. “I am the one for that. Sometimes I think—You see that tree?” He motioned with his head. The tree, whose crown was a blackened stump, stood among its fellows like a rotten tooth in a smiling mouth. “That

is how I shall die, at the top first. I am no companion for youth and beauty. There is that in me that frightens me. I have no name for it. But I tell you, you will be well rid of me."

His last words seemed to linger in the branches above them. Vanessa trembled slightly, as though a cloud had covered the sun, chilling the air. "I do not care," she said with an effort. "I cannot wish to be rid of you." She put her hand on his knee, where it lay against the black cloth of his breeches, small and fragile and a little pitiful.

He looked at it strangely. "Well," he said at last. "I have done what I can. I have no gift for confession. What I have said I will not say again. Pilate washed his hands; I have washed mine, to as little advantage, it seems. Now the rest of the story is for you to write. Make what you will of it. If I am cruel, the words are of your forming—you hurt yourself. If I am kind, it means no more. You are the author."

"And you——" Her voice was lighter than a breath. "You will see me again?"

"Folly, folly," he said, still with his eyes on her hand. "Yes, if you wish it."

The fingers of the hand clenched sharply, and opened again. "That is all I wish," she said. She put the hand to her bosom, as if to stop the beating of her heart.

He rode hard on the way back. His head throbbed, his mind turned over the details of their talk, over and over, wearily, obstinately, over and over again. He might have said this, he might have said that; and yet whatever he had said, he knew very well, would have changed nothing. His mission had been sure to fail at the outset and before that. The seeds of the present were in the past: they were sown in London years ago, and the ripeness of the harvest was not yet come.

What that harvest would be he did not know, but he could look back on the sowing, and the thought was bitter. It was the old bitterness again: that he had been capable of foreseeing all this, that he had, in fact, foreseen it in general terms even as a boy. But he had never been strong enough to practise his own preaching. That was the tragedy of man. The words of the wise might sometimes sway a multitude, but who cared for the multitude, if his wisdom could help neither himself nor his

friends? If you could not help your friends, it was better to have no friends. Remain aloof, and avoid grief, avoid the pain of disappointing—of disappointment. That was pure reason. Why not follow it? Why were men, with the god-like gift of reason, still men and not gods? His mind was full of helpless rage at the incurable humanity of man.

Mrs. Brent met him on the stairs. Dr. Sheridan, she said, had been in twice to see him.

"Aye?" he said forbiddingly.

"Will I send Robert to tell him you are here?" she asked.

"You will not," he said. He brushed by her. "My servants have something better to do, I trust, than attend on Doctor Sheridan's whims. Let him come again."

He slammed the door behind him, cast his hat on to a chair, and sat down gloomily at his desk. Castigate them, flay them, pillory them in all their littleness. That he would do, truthfully; put them, as they were, on show beside what they thought they were. He took up his pen, and began to sharpen it. His hand fumbled; he put it to his eyes as though to brush away a cobweb.

Sheridan interrupted him. The look he gave the young man would normally have given him pause, but not now.

"Doctor Swift," he said without preamble. "You were right. It has come."

Swift looked him up and down. "What is this?" he said in his most brutal tone. "Is this a seemly way to enter my room? Unbidden, and with not so much as a breath of apology? Must I remind you, Dr. Sheridan, that decorum is the least I expect from my clergy, and not the manners, or lack of manners of a harum-scarum Egyptian."

The young doctor looked amazed. "I——" he said. "I am sorry, Mr. Dean. I—had no idea—I had forgot. My news——"

"I will hear your excuses another time," Swift said, "when you are able to express them with more coherence. You have news, you say. I see the Cathedral is still standing as I left it. I cannot imagine any news except its fall to warrant this turbulent intrusion."

"I am sorry," Sheridan said again, with flushed cheeks. "It is Harding. I thought you would wish to know at once."

"Harding?" the Dean said. "What of Harding?"

"He is taken," Sheridan said. "But if I intrude indeed——"

"Be still," Swift said. "Let me alone." He rose from his chair, and began to pace up and down, with his hands behind him. His head ached, a noise like a wind roared in his ears, his tongue was dry and foul. He set his teeth and took control of his mind as he had fought his horse to a standstill with Blaney at his heels. He stopped, and stood, with his legs braced.

"Now," he said.

"It was last night," Sheridan began. He looked at the Dean curiously. "Are you not well, sir?" he asked.

"Well enough," Swift said. "But speak up. I am a little deaf. That is all. Go on, man. Go on."

"They took him from his house, it is said from his very bed, last night."

"That was subtlety," Swift said. "To take him at night. And where is he now?"

"In Mountjoy," Sheridan said, "in the common jail, with all the thieves and harlots of the town."

"On what charge?"

"I know not," the young man said. "It is not reported. Though I have heard he is to be granted bail. And that is why I came to you."

"Indeed," Swift said. "And why so?"

"Why——" Sheridan said, bewildered. "We must do something to——"

"Gather your wits, my friend," Swift said grimly. "Think a little, only a little. There is one thing we must do with all our might. That is, nothing. What do we know of this? Nothing. Not a word. Not one word. Therefore we do nothing. You understand?"

"But Harding——" Sheridan said.

"Harding was warned," Swift retorted. "He knew the risks. We can do nothing, yet. Later, when he comes to trial, we may if it is necessary, do a little, by way of pointing out that truth is not to be confined within stone walls, and so on. Meanwhile, Harding must stand alone. He is a good fellow; he will know what to do."

Sheridan stood irresolute, unconvinced. Swift crossed to his chair, and sat down again, tiredly. "Tom, Tom," he said, "you must take my word. Nothing will happen to Harding

now. I do not even think they can convict him of any punishable offence, if he holds his tongue. He will be tried before a jury, and that jury will consist of twelve solid burgesses of this town, not of the howling mob, nor of the gentry that drive them. They will not give up a man whose only fault is that he has risked his liberty that they may have theirs. That is true, is it not? I tell you, if the law is to be used against him, he is safe. They cannot do more than temporarily incommode him."

Sheridan heaved a long breath. "I must suppose you to be right, Mr. Dean," he said. "It only seemed——"

"I know," Swift said. "I know how you would feel. I know you, Thomas. You do not know me so well, and so I must ask your pardon for my ill temper. Do not blame yourself, Tom. I was looking for a whipping-boy when you came in. I have something of a headache, I am full of spleen, I am weary. I am best left alone at these times. So leave me now and I will send for you again."

Sheridan went, quietly. The Dean took up his pen again. His hand trembled, the tempest whistled inside his head, his whole being heaved with nausea. He sat with the pen poised, but wrote nothing. Instead of the paper, he saw a black void, a black spiralling emptiness on the brink of which he tottered ready to fall. When Stella came, he was still sitting there. With each breath he shuddered horribly, his teeth were clenched and saliva ran from the corner of his mouth.

She took his head in her hands. She spoke softly. Soon she had him on a couch, his head cushioned, his legs stretched out and blanketed. He looked up out of the abyss and saw her. He closed his eyes and his breath came easier.

Chapter Seven

He took to his bed, and stayed there a week and four days. For the first six days he knew no one. His features were congested; fever burnt him up, and he constantly threw off the covers. His eyebrows stood out in a black ridge; under them

his nose, pinched about the nostrils, projected like the beak of a great bird. Stella came each day. Even in his sickness, she did not break the habit of years, but came only in the afternoons, about three. Then she would sit by him, smoothing the sheets, touching his forehead, or holding his hand in hers. At those times he would quieten, and lie still. Occasionally his voice would rumble in his throat, and he would speak. His mind wandered. Sometimes she could follow him; sometimes he was in a world strange to her, peopled by figures she did not know. Then she felt lonely, deserted. She would sit anxiously, as though awaiting a summons; bend over him, and look into his face. Once as she did so he stared at her blankly; she saw the muscles of his throat move. He said chokingly: "Vanessa," and again, "Vanessa." Then, raising himself on his elbows, and with startling loudness: "I say, no." A spasm of pain took him; he dropped back, and rolling his head on the pillow muttered several times, "Never, never, never." This episode frightened her: he had looked so straitly at her, it had seemed for the moment he must be addressing her. She had never heard the name before, but it stuck in her mind with a vague familiarity, like that of a character in an old tale.

On the seventh day when she came, the fever had gone. His eyes were lucid; the voice in which he greeted her was weak, but his own voice again. "Stella," he said, "little Stella. I knew you would be here." She took his hand. He closed his eyes, and seemed to fall asleep; but when she would have moved, his fingers tightened. "No," she heard him say; it was less than a whisper. "Stay with me. Do not go." She smiled, as though to herself, and remained still, until he fell asleep indeed.

Four more days he lay there, recovering visibly hour by hour. At first he was gentle, as he never was in health, content to be out of pain. If she were there he asked no more. He did as he was bid, taking his medicine like a child. Then he began to grumble and call it ratsbane, pursed up his mouth and turned his head away. "Come now, Jonathan," she said sternly. "Be good. You must take it. It will make you well. And besides, it is not so bad. Look, I will take some." She swallowed a spoonful. He watched her for any sign of distaste: it was, in fact, disgusting. She showed nothing but relish.

"Very well then," he said, with an ill-grace. "Give it to me. It is no wonder Adam ate the apple." He took it. "Faugh! You lie with your face as well as your tongue." She knew he was much better. On the next day she found him shaved and sitting up; he had had Robert in to barber him.

"When I need a beard to get me reverence," he said when she complimented him on his appearance, "you may call that the end of Dean Swift. But I am not so old yet."

She laughed, but at the same time she knew that she had enjoyed the last few days, when he had been at her command, helpless. She felt a little sad. That seemed wrong, when there should have been nothing but gladness, that he was recovered. She reproached herself for the feeling.

So he was about again; a little pale, and at first with a little less energy of body. But his illness seemed to have cleared the humours from his mind, for the moment. He set himself to get back his full state of health, was much in the open air, and extended his activity to the water as well as to the road. He arranged for a boat to be at his call; I row after health like a waterman, he said in a letter to London, and ride after it like a postboy.

His riding took him often to Kildrought. By sheer weight of joviality he reconstructed a relationship with Vanessa which was a mirror of the old days. He sat with her in her arbour; drank the coffee which was such a symbol of their friendship—to him; and walked on the lawn when his hunger for movement would not permit him to be still, up and down, fifty times a visit. Sometimes he took friends with him, to introduce to her, eligible parsons like Dean Winter or Dr. Price. On those occasions she would be gay and charming; but afterwards, when they called alone, more often than not she denied herself to them, and after several denials they would come no more. Meanwhile her plantation of laurels grew. It was her one reference at this time to their conversation: an unspoken reminder of her passion. He ignored this, just as he ignored the unreality of the mirror he had made for them to meet in, in which their movements were as fantastic as a shadow-show. But seeing him, she seemed moderately content, and he asked for nothing better.

He was writing too; squibs, verses, letters, and his satirical tale of man. Gulliver had come to life, and was pursuing his fortunes with a kind of ferocious good-nature, in Lilliput. Of this work he said nothing; it was his pleasure. The verses included "Cadenus and Vanessa," which with every literary elegance of the day set out to rationalize his relationship with her. It escaped him that a relationship that required rationalization must be suspect; that a friendship whose recording called for the anagrammatization of his own title stood him upon his head in more senses than one; that, in short, he was again, with all the old persistence, applying reason to the basically unreasonable. He sent the poem to Vanessa as a present, intending it for a graceful compliment, and shutting his eyes to its possible effect on her. At the same time he wrote an equally graceful set of verses for Stella on her birthday.

Meanwhile he watched with sardonic amusement the hue and cry after Harding. The printer had been released on his own bail while Swift had been sick. He had declared stoutly that he had no inkling of the authorship of the offending pamphlet; that it had been left at his house after dark on a stormy night by a man muffled to the ears in a great cloak, who had handed it in and vanished; that he had thought from the man's bearing he had been someone of importance; and had printed the pamphlet for that reason, and with no idea of sedition, because he thought it would be of interest. He made a pretty story of it, and that, combined with the efforts of Lord Chief Justice Whitshed, had set the city of Dublin by the ears.

The Chief Justice, apparently in accordance with orders from above—there was no other reason for his extreme violence—had convened the grand juries both of the county and of the city to bring in the presentment against Harding. He had declared to them among other things, that the pamphlet was seditious, factious, and virulent in its nature, and that it was printed expressly with the design of setting the two kingdoms at variance. Every possible pressure was brought to bear on them, and when at last they published their charge, it was taken up by the newspapers and reproduced in them for several weeks, together with special thanks from the Ministry in London, for their loyalty and patriotism.

All this time Harding went about his business in the ordinary

way. Sale of the pamphlet had been stopped; in any case both printings had been sold out. Copies were passed from hand to hand until they fell to pieces: it was difficult to imagine any advertisement more effective than Whitshed's fulminations. Consequently, Harding prospered, for those who went to his shop intending to buy the one thing, seldom left without buying another; but it was reported that his wife had taken to her bed. On the day of his trial he went down to the courts in a hackney-coach, escorted by a crowd that grew until the coach could get no further, and he had to finish the journey on foot. He appeared in the dock no whit ruffled or put out, dapper and shining as ever, and preserved this appearance right through the long day.

Delaney brought the news to the Deanery. He came late, and found a mixed company: Sheridan, of course, Archdeacon Walls and his wife, Worrall and Mrs. Worrall, with others employed about the Cathedral; Proby, the Surgeon-General, a thin man with a nervous, worried look; Stella, and Rebecca Dingley.

The conversation stopped as he entered. They all turned towards him. He paused dramatically inside the door: his face beamed as he surveyed them. No one spoke as he crossed the room to Swift's chair by the chimney corner. He bowed to Swift.

"Mr. Dean," he said. "Your most obedient." He bowed to the room. "Your servant, ladies. Gentlemen." There was another silence. His eyes twinkled.

Swift said dryly: "Well?"

He swung round. "Very well, sir," he said. "It is—victory."

Sheridan jumped up. "Victory?" he said. "You mean——?"

"I mean victory," Delaney repeated. "Almost, I imagine, the first victory for the people of this kingdom since the days of Brian Boru."

Then they were all on their feet; all but Swift, who had not moved.

Delaney sat down, enjoying the effect of his words. Sheridan stood over him. He put a hand on Delaney's shoulder as if to shake him. "Well?" he said. "Well? Come on, man.

Tell us more. You cannot stop there. I——” he looked round helplessly.

“Quiet, Tom,” Swift said. “How can he speak with you hanging to his coat-tail like a terrier? Now, Delaney, tell us fairly. Is Harding free?”

“In fact, yes,” Delaney said. “The court sat at ten this forenoon, as you know. Everything began smoothly. The evidence was taken, Harding told his tale. The jury was most attentive. They listened to the witnesses, and to the speeches, like a class of Tom’s young hopefuls listening to the usher.”

“Did they?” Sheridan said. “If that’s all——” Swift frowned on him and he subsided.

“At one, my Lord Chief Justice dismissed them, all softness and smiling, to eat, and maybe take a sup of ale. For dessert, he gave them his summing up, very grave and solemn. At this point my lord was moved to lay his hand upon his breast. You would have thought he was about to puke at the depravity of this wicked world. The whole design of the pamphlet, he declared, was no less than to overthrow the throne and bring in the pretender.”

“Ah,” Swift said. “Did he so? And yet there was not one syllable——”

“No,” Delaney said, “but listen. The jury heard these matters with becoming seriousness. They retired, under Whitshed’s fatherly eye. They were out forty-five minutes. They returned. They gave their verdict. It was——”

“Not guilty,” Sheridan burst in. “I knew it. I knew it.”

“Aye,” Delaney said. “But you should have been there to get the full taste of it. There was quiet for a full minute, while my lord’s face purpled, and then as he opened his mouth——pandemonium. Hats flew into the air. You could see my lord shouting. He stood up, pounding upon his desk like a huckster at Kilkenny Fair. He made himself heard at last, roaring like a lion in a den of Daniels, threatening to call in the constables to restore order. He addressed the jury again, with a black scowl across his countenance. He called upon them to remember the nature of the charge, the responsibility that rested on them—and dismissed them to reconsider. This took them but five minutes, when with a perfect bovine stolidity they returned with the same

decision." He paused and laughed. "—But I cannot make drama out of comedy," he said.

"You do not so ill," Swift said. "Drury Lane could not have improved upon your entrance."

"I doubt that Mr. Harding took much pleasure in your comedy," Stella said.

"He is a stout little man," Delaney said. "And he has gone home a hero. That should compensate him."

"But what was the outcome?" Swift asked.

"The court has but just risen, at nine o'clock. Eight times, eight mortal times Whitshed sent back the jury. After the third occasion he cleared the galleries, and we were left to cool our heels on the pavement outside. The coffee-houses were the gainers. The whole town was in them, I think—with the very obvious exception of any single member of the Viceroy's court. At the last, quite wearied out, the jury brought in a special verdict, and left the whole matter to the mercy of the judge. Mercy, from that—that lawyer. He is advising on the matter, before pronouncing sentence."

"There will be no sentence," Swift said. "Mark me well. The thing has gone too far. And so the viceregal train was absent?"

"Conspicuously so," said Delaney.

"Well," Swift said, "if you pick a man for his stupidity, you cannot expect him to be a scoundrel too. Or rather you must expect him to be stupid first and scoundrel after. Stupidity knows no bounds, whatever the colour of its gown."

"You might say that it embarrasses everyone except its own self," Stella remarked.

"Bravo," Swift said. He gave her a fond look.

Sheridan laughed. "Nevertheless," he said, "embarrassed or no, I dare swear my lord is reflecting this moment on the wisdom of his grandsire. The one that cut his throat, I mean."

"Ah," Swift said. "I had forgot that." He sat up in his chair.

"In Christchurch of all places," Walls said in his querulous thin voice, which made every observation into a complaint.

"A poor sort of offering," Delaney said, sneering.

Swift raised a hand. "I have it," he said. "My last word on the upright Judge Whitshed. How is this?" He cleared

his throat, and leaning forward recited with a malicious gusto:

“In church your grandsire cut his throat;
To do the job too long he tarried;
He should have had my hearty vote,
To cut his throat before he married.”

He finished with a perceptible snap of his teeth, threw himself back, and looked round, sucking in his cheeks. There was general applause.

Sheridan slapped his thigh. “Capital,” he said. “That will bear repetition. I’ll write it down.” And he drew from the skirt of his coat a notebook, in which he wrote busily. As he finished he looked up to find the Dean watching him.

“Well, Tom,” Swift said in a low tone, “was I right?”

“You were indeed,” Sheridan said warmly.

“And therefore I am as pleased as if I had forecast the weather,” Swift said. “And with as little sense,” he added with a wry mouth. “The weather is at any rate subject to natural laws. But men—they follow too much the devices and desires of their own hearts, as the service says.”

“But in this case,” Sheridan protested, “surely it was their own interest, it was only reasonable——”

“Do not quote reason to me,” Swift said. “I have forsworn it. I am determined henceforth to be at one with my fellows, and that I shall never be while I use reason.”

The young man smiled, but there was doubt in his expression. Swift eyed him benevolently. “Never mind, Tom,” he said. “Think no more of it. Be off and eat with the others. And send my friend Proby to me. I have a notion he wished to speak to me in private, and this time is as good as any.”

A murmur of voices and the chink of glass and silver came from the next room. The company had moved away while they were talking. Sheridan went to do as he was bid.

The Dean was standing before the fire when Proby came in, coat-tails parted; an invariable sign of good humour in him. The surgeon-general, thin and lanky, with a nose as pointed as a quill, and tinted as if it had been dipped in red ink, entered hurriedly, his jaws still working to put down the last morsel.

“Well, sir,” Swift said heartily. “I am sorry not to have

had an earlier occasion to speak with you alone, but now I am at your service. How can I assist you ? ”

“ Mr. Dean,” the thin man began. He seemed to be at a loss for words. “ I—I have no possible right——” He looked at Swift with soft spaniel eyes that went strangely with his sharp face. He swallowed. “ I must come to the point. I have a favour to ask you. And that’s the long and short of it,” he finished with a kind of desperation.

“ My dear sir,” Swift said. “ Be seated, pray. I am an odd person to choose to ask a favour from—now more than ever. But as for asking, you have the right of the one man in Ireland of whom I have never heard an ill word spoken. You must be assured that anything I can do, if I can do it, I shall do with great satisfaction to myself. You must be assured of that. Now tell me. What is your wish ? ”

“ You—you are very kind,” Proby said almost inaudibly. He looked down at the floor, clasping and unclasping his hands. “ It’s my son, my eldest boy, Jack. I am not a rich man, Mr. Dean, but when I saw his heart was set on the army, I did what I could. I found the money to buy him a captaincy in Lord Tyrawley’s regiment. He was doing very well too. He’s a fine boy, Mr. Dean, a fine well set up young fellow. It would do your heart good to see him in his regimentals. But that’s no matter. What matters is that—that—well, I suppose I must out with it. He’s under arrest in Galway.” He blurted this out and then sat silent, blinking his eyes rapidly.

“ Under arrest ? ” Swift said. “ But for what ? ”

“ It’s absurd.” The surgeon-general started again as though he had just been wound up. “ But I am at my wit’s end. I don’t know what to do, nor who to go to. It’s absurd. The boy was well brought up. He hasn’t an ounce of popery in him. But that’s what he’s accused of—an inclination to popery. I don’t understand it. I can only think there’s something malicious—something—I don’t know. I was at my wit’s end, and then I thought: Dr. Swift. I know your reputation, sir.”

“ You do ? ” Swift said with a sardonic look. “ And so you came to me ? ”

“ Justice is all I—all my boy desires,” the ungainly man said with a natural dignity. “ A fair trial. But if the accusation is false, is the trial likely to be fair ? We have heard something of

that to-day. You are known as a man that loves justice, Mr. Dean. We have heard something of that too. And so—I was at my wit's end," he said again, as if that were full explanation.

"If a love of justice were all," Swift said, "we should be a nation of kings, with no more than a handful of commoners amongst us. I have no power, sir, no influence. If the Duke of Grafton were to pass by at my hanging, he would run to spring the trap himself in the full confidence of acquiring merit. All I have is a friend or two—maybe three. That is——" He paused and reflected. "But wait," he said slowly. "There is Tickell. He might help. He might listen. He at any rate has no cause to hate me. Yes, Tickell is our man."

He rose to his feet, and took a few paces, then stopped, and faced the other. "I will write you a letter to Mr. Tickell," he said. "Do not mistake me. All I can do is to get you to him. You must make your own case. My name will not help you there. With this viceroy I am worse than nothing. But Tickell has his ear; he is an honest man, and if you speak to him as you have spoken to me, I have no doubt he will help you for yourself, and in honour of your feelings as a father."

Proby opened his mouth to speak. Swift waved a hand at him. "Tush," he said brusquely. "No thanks. It is little enough to do. Be easy now. I will write the letter."

He went over to his writing desk, sat down, and began to write, fluently, without pausing. Proby sat where he was, blinking at the floor, and pulling at his knuckly fingers. From time to time he looked at Swift's back, gathered himself to speak, and then relapsed again. Into this, the silence and the scratching of the Dean's pen, Stella came. She paused by the desk. He glanced up at her, indicated the other man with the slightest motion of his head, and returned to his writing. She took the chair opposite Proby.

"No, no," she said, "do not move, sir, please. I have been intending to ask after your good wife. She is well, I hope."

"Moderately well, I thank you, ma'am," he said with a kind of unwilling accuracy. "As well as I can expect, with all this—this foolery going on."

"She must not worry," Stella said. "You must tell her I said she must not."

"I will indeed," he said. "She will be beholden to you, for your kindness."

"Dr. Swift is writing a letter for you?" she said in a low voice. He nodded. "You must rely on him," she said. "He is very good. If he takes an interest, he will never let it rest."

He blinked at her. "You are very good," he said. "You and the Dean both."

Swift pushed back his chair and came towards them. "There you are, friend Proby," he said. "I am sorry I can do no more—at present. If as they say, Grafton goes and my lord Carteret takes his place, then—— But your business will be settled, and in your favour, before that."

The thin man rose awkwardly. "Thank you, sir," he said simply. "I can only say——"

"Do not say a word," Swift said. "I cannot abide thanks, even when I merit them. And here I have done nothing." He pulled the bell-rope. "But let me know——" The door opened, and Blakely entered. Swift swung round. "What's this, sirrah?" he said. "Had you your ear at the keyhole, that you come so fast?" The man looked bewildered.

"Why no, your Honour," he said. "This letter has but this minute come—by hand. I fetched it up for fear it was urgent."

"Put it on the table then," Swift said. "And now this gentleman's hat and cloak. I swear that man is a knave," he said to Proby as Robert went out. "He is too good to be true. Good night to you, sir. You will let me know how Tickell receives you." He accompanied Proby to the door, talking down his protestations, over-riding even any attempt to say farewell. Idly, Stella picked up the letter from the table, smiling faintly at his high way with gratitude. She stood by the table, fingering the letter without seeing it. Swift came back into the room, rubbing his hands.

"There goes as good a fellow as breathes," he said. "With not a pennyweight of vice in his entire body, I do believe. If there were ten score like him, there would be hope for the world yet."

"He is an amiable creature," she assented. He looked at her sharply, finding something in her tone beyond the casual words. She played with the letter, oblivious of his eyes upon her. "Jonathan," she said, "there is something I have to say to you."

"Why," he said, rallying her. "Here's weightiness. Here's gravity, indeed. What is it then?"

She turned her head to him with a serious directness. "I—you will not fly into a rage?" she asked.

"I?" he said. "I rage? Oh, come. When did I ever rage?"

Her expression did not change. "We have been friends a long time, Jonathan," she said. "How many years?"

"More than I care to number," he said, still jesting, but watching her closely now.

"It is long time," she said again. "You taught me my letters, and more. You gave me my mind. You taught me to think like a man. You have often said so." He nodded, without speaking. "And then you gave me your friendship, and with it, your confidence. You opened yourself to me." She paused, and when she went on her voice seemed to emphasize and underline his growing stillness. "That was an honour. I don't think an honour like that has ever been paid a woman before. I valued it. This is something better, I thought, something beyond the ordinary bond between a woman and a man. And I have never regretted it. I have been very happy."

She was silent again, her head bent, turning the letter over and over in her hands. It was he that spoke, after a long time.

"And so?" he said, as if he found it an effort.

"I am still a woman," she said very quietly. The words had an odd effect of challenge.

"You are talking like a woman," he said roughly. "You have something to say. Why not say it?"

"We made a bargain between us," she said, and he interrupted her.

"Bargain?" he said. "What bargain? I know of no bargain."

"We made a bargain," she repeated steadily. "Marriage is one kind of bargain. No——" she stopped him. "Don't speak. We have never even talked of it. I know. Ours was another kind of bargain. We never spoke of that either, but we made it."

He made a sound in his throat, took several sharp paces away from her, and then turned again, staring.

"I have kept my side of it," she said. "Are you keeping yours?"

"I——" he said thickly. "What sort of question is that? What do you mean?"

She sighed. "I think you know what I mean very well, Jonathan," she said. "We have been so circumspect these many years, so very prudent. We knew our way, but we knew the world's way too. Our friendship has been perfect, with not even a smear of gossip to mar it. And for that, all this long time I have been hostess at your table, but never dwelt in your house. How many times have we been together, without Rebecca there too? You could count them on the fingers of a hand. Even letters—I do not think I have ever had a letter of yours addressed to me alone."

"And do you complain now?" he burst out. "Do you——"

"You know I do not," she said. "Why should I? I have told you I have been happy. But," she raised her voice almost imperceptibly, "do you expect me to sit silent when tittle-tattle about you begins to run from one end of Dublin to the other?"

"What is this?" he said slowly. "Who——"

"Who?" she repeated. "What does it matter? The birds of the air if you like. The Dean rides often to Kildrought, does he not?" she said with a shadow of mimicry. "The Dean this, and the Dean that—and always the sneer is at me, not you."

"Who?" he asked again, "tell me who——"

"And what will you do?" she asked. "Even just now, to-night, Mrs. Walls asked me if I had heard that the Dean had writ a fine poem to a beautiful lady. What will you do to that? Tell her she lies?" He was silent. "Of course you will not. You can do no more than I have already done—— I told her it was well known the Dean could write finely on a broomstick if he chose—and left her to swallow the snub. But do you think I like it? I am still a woman, Jonathan."

He stared at her queerly. "Aye," he said, "still a woman. And I had near forgot it. We have been friends, not man and woman, but two friends coming together in the mind. But now, like a woman, you must spoil it, taint it, clothe it in flesh——"

"Stop it," she said. She stamped her foot. "You shall not speak so, to me. I have hurt you, I know, but not from jealousy. You should know me better. I am not jealous. I know you

too well. But I am trying to be rational, as you taught me to be. If I know of something that can injure you and me both and that I can cure by speaking of it, would it be rational to hold my tongue? So I will not let you hurt me now, and regret it after. I have told you, and that is the end of it. We will speak of it no more. I know you will think of it."

She straightened herself, as if to dismiss the entire subject. "And so I will go back to our guests," she said in a lighter tone. "But here is your letter, that I have been holding all this time." She gave the letter into his hands. He glanced at the superscription automatically. His pose stiffened. She walked towards the door, but at the door turned and said a little wistfully, "I have not asked her name, Jonathan. I do not wish to know it. But is she—Vanessa?"

For a moment they faced each other across the room. Then she parted the curtains, and passed through them without speaking. He looked again at the letter, as though it were a lethal weapon. He opened it. As he read, his expression hardened. He said through his teeth, one word, "Vanessa." In his voice was a whole lifetime of rage, mortification and contempt. With a sharp movement he tore the letter across, and then across again. He threw the pieces on to the fire, and watched them shrivel, flame, and disappear.

Chapter Eight

"I received your letter when some company was with me on Saturday night," he wrote to Vanessa, "and it put me in such confusion that I could not tell what to do. This morning a woman who does business for me told me she heard I was in love with one—naming you, and twenty particulars——"

He laid down the pen, and stared out of the window, where a rag of cloud streamed across the sky behind the cathedral spire like smoke from a chimney. He had sat himself down to write with a coldness painfully induced, carefully fostered over several

hours; now as soon as he began he felt his restraint cracking like new plaster on a sunny wall. Half-formed thoughts jostled each other round his mind in a kind of drunken jig, never standing for a moment to be caught and confronted face to face. The shadows of these two women, Stella, Vanessa, Vanessa, Stella, bobbing and curtsying on their little stage like the flighty victims of a nightmare Punchinello. Both his creations, both as surely creatures of his mind as if they had never had any existence apart from him; both like, and yet utterly unlike; both using the same words, the same words meaning something utterly different. Both in a sense his children, both claiming his loyalty and love, manifestly irreconcilable, each jealous of the other, pulling in opposite directions, tearing him in two.

Stella, the elder, from whom he would not part even if he could. Their friendship distorted, a thing now, suddenly, of half-looks, frowns and little coldnesses; the warmth gone from it, the comfortable mutual knowledge shadowed with mistrust, bespattered with words, words more empty than mischievous, more idle than intent. And above all, between them, one word——

Vanessa. Vanessa—the younger, from whom he could not—— could not——

Could not?

He made a smothered sound in his throat, clenched his two hands, and raised them to his head with a violence that could be heard. After a moment, he stood up, and began to pace the room. A woman—told me she had heard I was in love with one—she heard—in love. There in the one sentence the two things together, the two surest matches to the train of his rage, that so sweetly took the place of thought. The dirty paws of gossip, dabbling in a man's entrails; the immediate assumption that the end was "love."

He had turned on Mrs. Brent like a maniac, at that; his sickness grinned at her through his fury. "Love," he brought out, choking, "the filthy—the vile, scummy, filthy ordure of diseased minds. What am I, then—a footman? A stinking, greasy footman, to be so talked of by half the wax-nosed kitchen-maids in Dublin?"

Knowing him now, the woman stood her ground. "'Tis sorry I am to repeat it, sir," she said. "Nor would I, if you had

not forced it from me. Kitchen talk is kitchen-talk all the world over. For myself, I've enough to do minding my own business, to give heed to such blether."

The implied reproof had stopped him in mid-stride, as the recollection of it stopped him now. He had glared at her, drawn breath for words to blast her from the room—and in the drawing of a breath sunk into the lassitude that so often followed his rages. Rage, weariness, one following the other as night followed day; man hurling himself against life like the sea upon the shore, and in a little while subsiding, the tide ebbing into the dusk. He could not see man without that rage that was man's vital spark; without it he was a smouldering fire to be prodded and fanned into flame; when he was burnt out he was dead. And afterwards—another life, life everlasting? The Church affirmed it, he himself preached it; but to believe—— A man's belief was in what he was, the fruit by which the tree should be judged was in the growing, the judgment not prejudiced by frost or storm. Maybe death itself was paradise, and paradise the release from life; eternal nothingness, eternal bliss.

He sighed, and sat down again at the desk. He wrote now automatically, without interest, the words forming themselves at the end of the pen. "I ever feared the tattle of this nasty town, and told you so: and that was the reason why I said to you long ago that I would see you seldom when you were in Ireland; and I must beg you to be easy if for some time I visit you seldomer, and not in so particular a manner. I will see you at the latter end of the week if possible. These are accidents in life that are necessary and must be submitted to; and tattle, by the help of discretion, will wear off."

Time at any rate wore away, quietly and soberly after the excitement and activity of the pamphlet and Harding's trial. He had again leisure to consider his lot, to brood, and to write letters to his friends, half jesting, half bitter. "If you will recollect that I am some years older than when I saw you last (he told Bolingbroke), and twenty years duller, you will not wonder to find me abound in empty speculations: I can now express in a hundred words what would formerly have cost me ten. I have gone the round of all my stories three or four times with the younger people, and begun them again. I give hints

how significant a person I have been, and nobody believes me: I pretend to pity them, but am inwardly angry. I lay traps for people to desire I would show them some things I have written, but cannot succeed: and wreak my spite in condemning the taste of the people and company where I am. But it is with place as it is with time. If I boast of having been valued three hundred miles off, it is of no more use than if I told how handsome I was when I was young. If I can prevail on anyone to personate a hearer and admirer, you would wonder what a favourite he grows. He is sure to have the first glass out of the bottle, and the best bit I can carve. Nothing has convinced me so much that I am of a little subaltern spirit, as to reflect how I am forced into the most trifling amusements to divert the vexation of former thoughts and present objects."

That letter was among the trifling amusements; others were not so trifling. He had more friends than he was apt to allow. Even some that might have spoken against him in public, were not unprepared to render him small services under the rose—providing they need not be acknowledged. It was a form of insurance: with the Dean of St. Patrick's, it was no more than common prudence. He himself, while making prophecies on the outcome of Harding's affair, left no means untried to ensure their coming true. He wrote to Sir Thomas Hanmer to bespeak his aid with Grafton; and to Constantine Phipps for his influence with the Attorney-General, to grant a writ of error.

At the same time he gave some thought to young Doctor Sheridan. He had never been able to resist the charming spectacle of a young man, as full of energy and as unsure upon his feet as a puppy-dog, brimming with life like a purse full of money waiting to be spent. His first instinct was to help such a one, perhaps because his own youthful thirst for acknowledgment had been so keen. He would do this for someone he knew only by name: where friendship and liking were involved, there was no limit to his endeavours. For Sheridan he had an amused affection; the young schoolmaster was so merry, so easily put down, and yet for so short a time; he was no genius and yet had wit; he was no man's enemy but his own. With all this he was said to be the best teacher in Dublin: even if it seemed a little unlikely, that did not hinder the Dean from recommending his school on every possible occasion, without conscientious qualm

or any sense of inconsistency. He had no respect whatever for orthodox scholarship. If Sheridan's boys got from him his frankness and honesty, and a grounding in the humanities, they could do without logic and philosophy, and be the better for their lack. On the same reasoning, he had no hesitation in laying claim to preferment on Sheridan's behalf; he said nothing of this to the young Doctor, yet; but he bombarded the patrons of suitable livings with letters which he would no more have written in his own interest than he would have sung for coppers outside St. Patrick's.

There was a good deal of singing for coppers, and a good deal of whining, and even more stoical endurance of hunger and want, in Dublin these days. Beggars were as numerous as a plague of flies in the main streets; while in the narrow courts and dingy alleys behind the Cathedral, men, women, and children died of starvation, and those still on their feet walked ghostlike by the walls to hold themselves up. Swift's charity, administered by Mrs. Brent, had spread widely; and consequently he was not now avoided as he had been, when he went abroad, and there were kind looks as well as sullen. His own brusque manner and rough words he modified not at all; but now there were some, especially among the older women, who would greet him with the upright hardihood of the honest poor, with which he was perfectly at home. In more than one mean street there lived some toothless witch who could count herself a friend of the Dean; with whom he would joke in his fierce way, calling her Pullagowna, or Stumpanympha, or by some other fantastic name of his own invention. These he would leave chuckling behind him as he walked on, frowning and intent.

In fact, he found nothing to please him in the condition of his people, least of all his own charities, for in relation to the total volume of want, they could be no more than negligible. His victory in the matter of his pamphlet was less than nothing; free speech would not feed the hungry. Nor could his advice benefit those most in need of it—as well tell them to buy the moon as to buy only goods made in Ireland—or anything else. Burn everything from England, except their coal, he had said—to people who would willingly have burnt the throne of England if they could have laid hands on it, and that merely for warmth and leaving spite aside.

As for himself, every circumstance of his life conspired with every other to underline his own position, solitary, disgraced, and likely to remain so. His party and his friends, the party of the landed aristocracy, who alone had any true idea of the dignity and greatness of England, had little if any chance of regaining power under the rule of a foreign king, whose roots were in a foreign soil. The Whigs, representing the trading interest, immovably entrenched behind the king's indifference, would have sunk Ireland fathoms deep beneath the sea if there had been a profit in it. The Irish gentry, that should have been foremost in her defence, and to whom he should have been able to speak, were instead in the front of the undignified and contemptible scramble for favour under the crown, regardless at once of their own eventual impoverishment and of the immediate urgent plight of the people—their people, in whom it should have been plain that the only real riches of the country lay.

Against this dead-weight of self-seeking stupidity, and bemused wretchedness, he stood alone. But now, in addition to his resentment against the authors of his exile among savages, there was growing up in him, almost unrecognized, a genuine compassion for the savages themselves. Now his resolve to have vengeance on the one was being reinforced by a waxing purpose to assist the second. But to do either he had to work upon the intermediate mass, the petty lordlings and the little squires. To appeal to their patriotism as Irishmen was labour lost, for they considered themselves more English than the English. That was their pride, and in that way they might be reached, not as Irish at all, but as English. The other way was surer still—through their pockets. There all men were vulnerable.

He looked about for a cause.

Stella found him, one Friday afternoon, berating Robert Blakely. At her entrance he stopped, and turned away.

"Am I come at a wrong time?" she asked, pausing at the door. She had heard his voice on the stairs, and now the signs were plain enough: the Dean's black brow, and Robert flushed and ill at ease. She did not wish to go; she had a high opinion of the man, and was glad to help him if she could.

"No," Swift said, ungraciously, over his shoulder. "I am done. You may go, sirrah."

"But sir——" the man began.

"I said you may go," Swift repeated, and swung round. His eyes were dangerous. "Begone then." The man hesitated, moistened his lips, and then, obviously on impulse, addressed Stella.

"Madam," he said. "I beg you. Can you not——"

"What's this?" Swift broke in. Stella looked at him: their eyes met for a moment. "Yes, Robert," she said gently. "Go on."

"The master mistakes me, madam," he said, with a kind of desperation. "I cannot make him see—if you could explain for me——" Swift moved restively. "Yes, Robert?" Stella said again.

"I was asking the master if he could pay the servants to-day in smaller coin," the man said, "so that——"

"So that people—what people?—shall not say I starve them," Swift cut him short. "Or other such fantastic insolence."

"No, sir," Blakely said, "if your honour will but hear me——" he looked at Stella. She smiled back at him. "'Tis so they shall not run into debt. I should think shame for the servants of the Deanery House to be indebted to all the little tradesmen of the Bail. It would not be fitting."

"That is a very proper feeling, Robert," Stella said. "But if the Dean is to pay them, why should they be in debt?"

"Because they are an idle set of good-for-nothing spendthrift dogs and sluts," Swift said savagely.

"No, your honour," the man said. "It is because of the coin. Small change is scarce to be got these days, madam—and if a man goes to the alehouse for a quart of twopenny ale, and offers a silver shilling for payment, the wife is likely hard put to it to give him his tenpence, and maybe cannot at all. But seeing his shilling, she will chalk it up on the slate. 'Tis a great temptation to a poor man to spend more than he has." He finished breathlessly, and looked again at Swift with some uncertainty.

"And so," Swift said, "I must pay you in butcher's halfpence, or black dogs—so that you may tiddle in a boozing ken with a clear conscience. And what stews must I frequent to get this lordly coin?"

Robert was silent. Stella said: "Very well, Robert. The Dean will think of it. Go now." He went, with another pleading glance at Swift, and as the door closed, "Well, madam," Swift said, "so the Dean will think of it? And of what shall the Dean think, pray? The fittest way to thank Mistress Johnson for her support of an impudent scoundrel?"

Stella sat down. She was paler than usual, and looked tired. "You are very wearisome, Jonathan," she said. "The man is a good loyal fellow, though you will not have it so——"

"If he were an angel of God," Swift said, in a suppressed tone, "I should still deny him the right to interfere in my domestic economy. As for you, mistress, you are not to come between me and my servants. Do you understand me?"

"No," she said. "I thought I did, but I see I do not. Are you quarrelling with me, Jonathan?"

"Quarrelling?" he said with an ugly look. "Not I. I might, if anyone were to take me up on every word, and every act; if I were to be charged with everything I do as with a crime, and found guilty without trial—then I might quarrel indeed. But with you? No. Why should I?"

"Oh, Jonathan, Jonathan," she said. "Sometimes I wonder why I bear with you."

"Then why do you?" he retorted. "Is it of my asking? If what I do displeases you, if what I am is not to your taste, the remedy is with you."

"Yes," she said sadly. "You do not change. Sometimes I used to think——" Her voice stumbled, but almost immediately she went on. "You are like a man in prison, Jonathan, penned in a narrow cell, only this is of your own building. Sometimes I used to think I might—you might break out. I did not mind waiting—you have that in you that could make you—a king among men. But with it you have a devil, a devil of pride, and self-will, walled up with you in your prison, whispering constantly in your ear. You will never be a king, Jonathan, because to be a king you must first be a man like other men, and that your pride will never let you be. Not now."

Her voice was so quiet that when she stopped speaking it was almost as though she had not spoken at all. She sat placidly, with her hands clasped, looking at the ground. Only the line of her shoulders, drooping, gave her words expression. He eyed

her with a look like amazement, shadowed even with fear. "So I am a devil too," he said, with an effect of bravado which was far from his intention. "The more reason for you to leave me."

She raised her head. "I cannot leave you," she said. "You know it very well. We have been friends too long. A mere parting cannot part us." She looked at him fully. "You may do with me as you will, Jonathan. You may wrong me if you choose, and then justify yourself, if you can, by quarrels over trifles. You may do this, and more. I cannot leave you."

His eyes wavered. Rebecca Dingley came in, closing the door behind her fussily, as though it were an affair of state. She turned to them a face beaming with sober satisfaction. "There is saddle of mutton for dinner," she said. "And I brought over some mint for Mrs. Brent. Was not that fortunate?" She sank billowing into a chair. "You really should have a herb garden, Dean," she said. "I am sure you could have a little one in the close there, where no one could see it. It means so much to a tasty dish." She smoothed down her skirts and looked around her. "Were you having a good chat?" she asked.

She looked from one to the other. "I'm sure you are both very glum," she said. "Though I don't see why. It cannot be the news, surely. It seemed dull enough to me, whatever Hetty may say; certainly nothing to get into a wrangle over."

"What news?" Swift said without interest, to stop her tongue.

"It was but a paragraph in the news-letter," Stella said in the same tone. "I thought you would be interested, and was to tell you of it. It was nothing."

"Must you be coy?" he said with a flash of irritation. "If there is news, tell it."

"It was about the new half-pence," she said tiredly. "I had it in my mind, and so was caught by Robert's story. They are to mint some new half-pence."

"And not before it was time," Swift said. "That at least is true. Who is to do the minting?"

"One William Wood," she told him. "An ironmaster."

"An ironmaster?" he said. "I never knew there was an ironmaster in all Ireland."

"I know not," she said. "This one is in England."

"What?" he said. He frowned. "They are to mint halfpence for Ireland, in England? This smells of jobbery, right across the Irish Sea. And if it is jobbery, then I have them. It is all I need." His cheeks flushed, his eyes sparkled.

"Is it?" she said, with faint mockery. "Is that all you need?"

His excitement subsided. "It is all I need," he said, almost defiantly, "to make me king of this land, at any rate."

"I remember you prophesied it once before," she said. "What was it you called it then? This—this happy land of thieves, stinks and Irishmen?" She laughed quietly. "Poor Jonathan. Is that your kingdom? It was not that I meant."

He glared at her, head lowered. A vein stood out on his temple. "You——" he said. He made a choking sound, sprang up, and plunged out of the room, slamming the door thunderously behind him.

Rebecca looked after him with an astonishment that was nearly idiotic. Her mouth hung open. She turned to Stella. "What in——" she began, and then, with sudden sympathy, "Why, Hetty," she said, "you mustn't——"

Stella put her hand to her eyes. "Be still, Rebecca," she said in a stifled tone. "Be still." Slow tears ran down her face.

Chapter Nine

The next day she did not come, nor the next. He was glad she did not. He could not have borne to see her. He went about his business in the usual way, showing nothing of his mind. He did not relax even for an instant; his face was set, his eyes cold, although everything on which they rested seemed half-hidden by a reddish mist. Only occasionally he would take a deeper, careful breath, filling his lungs laboriously and emptying them with a grudging suspiration. At those times his hands would clench until the nails bit into the palms, her voice in his

ears as clear as though she were there with him, the hateful taunt so calmly uttered: Poor Jonathan. Is that your kingdom?

At those times his spirit sickened. If he had dared give himself rein, he would have gnashed his teeth and howled. He dared not relax. The grinning dog-face of madness looked over his shoulder. He dared not meet its eyes. He went about his business in the usual way, though his limbs seemed made of iron, numb and inflexible, clanking as he walked.

Nothing she could have said could have been one-tenth as hurtful, or have pierced so deep. She could talk as she wished of his pride. Pride was his being, pride in his reason, pride in his resolution. He was proud of his body, its cleanliness, its integrity. He was proud of his ambition; and proud, not of his charities, but of his ability to dispense charity. I am what I am, he said; and there was pride in that too. Humility he did not understand. He had no doubt of his competence to assess his own worth as compared with that of any man living. He put it higher than most: at any rate, he had never met a man before whom he need feel ashamed; least of all had he ever felt ashamed in his own sight. He had never in his life, consciously, done a shameful thing. His faults had been impetuosity, over-frankness, impolitic loyalty. Yet now——

She had lured him, with her silly prattle of kings and kingdoms, into a stupid boast. She had taunted him with it. "Is that your kingdom?" This dismal dirty sink, this hive of wretchedness, his kingdom. She, who knew, as no other person knew, his inner thoughts, his aspirations, his ambitions, to taunt him so, to use his temporal disgrace to hint so subtly at a spiritual fall. He hated her for that.

He hated her.

You may wrong me if you choose, she had said. And justify yourself if you can.

He hated her.

The great house was silent. The corridors returned an empty echo of his rapid step. In the afternoons, when there had been pleasant chit-chat by the fire, and laughing, he sat alone and wrote. Gulliver grew out of the good humour of his begetting, grew downwards from a giant to a pigmy, a minuscule plaything

in the hands of gigantic and obscene women. The Dean sneered savagely at himself, and drew a world where men were benignly great and wise, but where the women were great only in the grossness of their imperfections.

His servants were quiet and respectful beyond the usual. They exerted themselves to please. But behind his back he could feel their meaning glances. He would turn sharply, to catch them at it, and find only downcast eyes and submissive attitudes. More than once he flung open the door of his room in an effort to surprise a whispered colloquy with a visitor, about to be announced; but never could. Visitors came still, on the usual evenings, to make constrained conversation. They found his temper frightful. He would sit and glower from the chimney corner, awaiting the utterance of any folly to spring out on it like a tiger. This happened often; the effect of his stare upon the nervous was singularly unfortunate. But if they stayed away, he sent for them to know the reason.

When they had gone, and the house was dark, he would fall into a fit of violent trembling, his lips blue, his body like ice. The servants could hear him tramping up and down, endlessly.

All this time he was waiting for someone to mention Stella; no one did, until Sheridan dared it. They were alone.

"Mr. Dean," the young man said. There was a pale air of resolution about him. Swift said nothing. "You have often told me I am stupid," he went on quickly, "and maybe I am. Maybe I have never been so big a fool as now. I cannot say I care. There is something that must be said——"

"Then say it, but briefly, in God's name," Swift told him, "and spare me the complete calendar of your shortcomings. I know them well enough."

"It is—Mistress Johnson," Sheridan blurted out. The Dean stood up. The movement might have been involuntary. He looked down at the other, scowling.

"Soh," he said. "And does she make you her messenger?" His voice rose oddly on the last word. He put up a hand to loosen his neck-band, so suddenly that the young man half recoiled from him.

"No, no," he said. "No, I speak for myself only. Hear me out, I beg," he interrupted himself. "This is no wanton

interference. I would not—I do not know what is between you to bring you at odds, but——”

Swift’s face suffused with blood. His eyes glared. “Do—do you presume?” he brought out. “You insolent young dog——”

Sheridan stood up too. “I am determined you shall hear me,” he insisted. “I will ask your pardon after, though I have no thought of insolence. But this is something you must know. Madam Stella is ill.”

There was silence, then Swift said, as though he did not understand: “Ill?” He wetted his lips. “Of what?”

“I do not know,” Sheridan said. “I waited upon her this morning, and—sir, if you could have seen her. There is no life in her, no wit, no will. She sits, and her eyes weep of themselves. Her very voice is faded. I—I could not bear it. I had to tell you.” He turned half away.

The Dean sat down heavily. “Ill,” he repeated to himself. “So that’s it. So that’s it. Did she speak of me?” he asked in a dull tone.

“Only to know how you did,” Sheridan said. “I told her you seemed well enough, and she nodded her head and said no more. And so I screwed up my courage, and came to tell you. I was sure you could not have heard.”

“No,” Swift said. “How should I hear? Why should any take the pains to come and tell me, that sets up to know everything without being told? There are not many like you, Tom, to do a friend a kindness knowing they will get nothing but insults for their trouble.” He sat shrunk in his chair, staring at the floor. He put his hand to his face. “I did not know she was ill. I thought instead—I thought—I could have asked, could I not?” he said savagely, looking up. “But no, not I. Not I.” His head sank again. “And now what? What shall I do now, Tom?”

“You can go and see her,” Sheridan said eagerly. “See her and ask her pardon—I am imputing no fault to you,” he added hastily. “There is no need to be at fault to ask a woman’s pardon.” The Dean smiled faintly; the young man paused a moment, then smiled too, and hurried on: “I know what you are thinking. I have not done so well myself in this business of wedding, but I assure you I know——”

"Who spoke of wedding?" Swift asked. His tone took Sheridan aback.

"Why, no one," he said. "Or did I? Oh yes. I was thinking of my wife. But no matter. See her, I say, and ask her pardon—make a fault if there is none—and you will marvel how the sky will clear. I assure you, I know I am right. Then take her away—to the country—take her to my house at Quilca if you have nowhere better. Forget the Town, and rusticate a while. The country air, and fresh milk, and your company, will soon set all to rights."

"It is all very easy," Swift said, "to hear you tell it. But suppose she will not see me?"

"Don't think of it," Sheridan said. "I know I am right."

"Well," Swift said. "At any rate I know I am wrong. It may not be the same thing, but it is enough for now." He got wearily to his feet, and put a hand on Sheridan's shoulder. "I will go and see, Tom, and maybe try your remedy."

He went that same day, but his problem was not resolved. He was like a man stumbling along a tunnel of darkness without knowing its issue. He knew well enough, after the last few days, that to live without Stella was unthinkable. He knew that that, and his friendship with Vanessa, were irreconcilable. Each was innocent, yet bring them together and at once an odour of corruption filled the air: bad faith, betrayal, broken bargains. But only at the point of conjunction—which was in himself. And again his mind rebelled, his eyes closed: his eyes, so keen to see the folly of others, would not see his own.

So he went to Stella, but with no idea what he would say. He went for comfort, because she was the only one who could give it; because without her his mind had no anchor. But what he was to say to her he had no idea; even when he stood in her doorway, blinking like a man come suddenly into the light, he had no idea.

After all, he did not need to say a word. He saw Stella's eyes brighten at the sight of him. He saw Dingley stand up. For a moment he saw that Stella was smiling. Then, with a wrench like the breaking of something physical, tears blinded him. He stumbled across the room towards her and took her hands. If

he had gone full of speeches, he could not have spoken. It was she that spoke.

"Jonathan, Jonathan," she said. "Why must you hurt yourself so?" He fought with himself, ashamed of his weakness. She shook his hands gently. She was talking to give him time to recover, caressing him with her soft voice. "Ever since I have known you it has been the same. Even the very first time—do you remember it——?"

And as she went on it took shape, clear and clean like a memory of childhood: the sunlight and shadow, the faint fresh scent of the blossom, the little breeze.

"I hid and watched you," she said; he saw her quite plain, hiding, peering round the tree, the little girl in brown watching curiously the young man in black, that was himself. The young man was writing, leaning against another tree. His knees were bent up to support his paper; beside him on the grass were his large black hat and a pewter ink-well. He wrote absorbedly, stopping only to dip his quill in the ink, his brows drawn together, frowning. From time to time he shook his cropped head impatiently, violently, as if to rid himself of a troublesome fly; each time he did so the tree quivered and his wig, hanging from a pruned branch above him, nodded agreement; a petal or two of blossom floated gently down. Then, with a sudden movement, he sprang to his feet, took off his long full-skirted coat and flung it over the branch from which the wig was hanging. He loosed the white bands round his throat, and ran down the avenue between the scented trees as if a devil were at his heels. The letter, forgotten, lay face downward upon the ground, where the breeze stirred it, tentatively.

"I was frightened," she said. "I hardly dared come out. But the letter was too much, I had to see it." The little girl's face was round but pale; her voluminous skirt hid her feet. On her head was a lace cap. She came out and stood looking down at the letter with large solemn eyes. She shook her head from side to side, violently, in a comic attempt at imitation. Then, glancing cautiously around, she sat down where he had been, settled herself against the tree, and drew up her knees. She picked up the letter. Holding it upside down she made believe to read it, following the lines with her great eyes, and moving her lips, but making no sound. She took up the pen, and a darker

shadow fell across the delicate shifting tracery of the leaves.

"Well, madam," the young man said. His voice was deep and terrifying. She sat quite still, while he wiped the sweat from his face with a white 'kerchief. "Well, madam," he said again, deeper yet. "And so you pry; peep and pry into that which is no concern of yours." She did not reply, but ventured an upward glance under long lashes. He was putting on his coat. Carefully she placed the quill back in the ink-well, laid down the letter and got to her feet, taking care to make no sound. He watched her without seeming to do so. She began to edge away. "So," he said, like thunder now. "Here's impudence; here's brazenness; here's a woman. What, will you steal my secrets, foul my pen, and then without a word sneak off like a Covent Garden cutpurse? No, madam, but you shall not. Come. Come here, I say."

He threw himself down under the tree, while she turned on one heel, very slowly, and came back to stand before him, hands together at her waist, eyes downcast. He considered her grimly.

"That is more seemly," he said at last. "Now let us see if there is a tongue in that prim mouth. Tell me your name."

"Esther," she said. She raised her head and looked at him. Brown eyes met blue, hers soft, his fierce, penetrating.

"Esther," he said roughly. "A star. That is no name."

"My name is Esther Johnson," she said. "But you can call me Hetty."

"Can I indeed?" he said.

"If you like," she said. "I like you."

He stared. "And suppose I don't like," he said. "Suppose I tell you I don't like little girls at all. Would that surprise you?"

"No," she said. He caught a glimpse of small white teeth.

"My mother said you were a strange young man. She told me your name, too."

"Did she so?" he said. "And who is this mother of yours, that knows so much? A guest of Sir William's?"

"Oh no," the little girl said. "She is the housekeeper."

"Mistress Johnson," he said softly. "So you are—that child I have heard of. And which pantry does she keep you in?" he enquired.

"No pantry at all," she said indignantly. "I have my own room. It has a window in it, too. But I have been away. Visiting," she ended with a quaint air of importance.

"And so you come back from your visit—to read my letter," he said, more fiercely than ever. "Did it please you? Did you find it adequate?"

Her pale cheeks took on a faint pinkness. "I wasn't—reading it," she said, very low.

"Do you know what happens to liars?" he asked terribly.

"Truly I wasn't," she said. "I——" she was lost in shame. "I—can't read. Not writing. I can read print, though—if it's not very small." She looked at him hopefully.

"Not—read?" he said, as if unable to credit his ears. He drew down his black brows, and sucked in his cheeks. His eyes twinkled. "Not read—a great strapping wench of your years—how old are you, madam?" he asked abruptly.

"Eight," she said sadly.

"Eight," he repeated, "eight—and cannot read but large print. Oh, fie. That is shameful." Her lip trembled. "Well," he said briskly, "'tis not too late yet. We must even mend it. Come now: sit down beside me, here."

She looked at him in doubt, and then sat down, spreading her skirts sedately. "Now," he said. "What shall we read?" He looked about. "Oh, yes. This will do very well." He picked up the letter. "See then. You shall begin. At the beginning."

There was a quivering silence. "Come, come," he said. "Do not pretend complete ignorance, pray. Give me the letters one by one. That first is like print. What is it now?" He waited.

At last she said, desperately: "M."

"Right," he said. "You see: it is easy. Now this next is a, and then d; then a again, and a little m. What does that spell? M-a-d-a-m?"

"Madam?" she said, as if she did not believe it. She clapped her hands as the meaning dawned on her. "I know. You are writing a letter to a lady."

"Never mind that," he said. "Let us continue. Here is i——" He spelt on. Impatience, the first sentence ran, is the most inseparable quality of a lover. At that:

"Do you love her very much?" she asked.

He looked down into her innocent wide eyes, and then put back his head against the trunk of the tree to stare upwards through the blossom. "I am tormented by the prospect of rapture," he said between his teeth. "And she—she will argue first this way and then another, while we perpetually and for ever lose millions of glorious minutes—to gratify empty forms and wrong notions, affected coldnesses and peevish humour."

"Is she very beautiful?" the little girl asked.

"Beautiful?" he said savagely. "She is weakly and ailing. She has known sickness longer than she has me, and is loath to part with it as an older acquaintance. She dwindles away her life among the conversation of an insipid and grasping family."

"I do not like her," the child said decidedly.

"Nor I," he said. "I merely love her. She says she loves me, but will not come to me. Together we might win her health and my fortune, but she will not have it. I am too reckless, too bold——" He stopped and shook his head angrily. She watched him with a curious look, moving her own head in unconscious sympathy.

"Why do you do that?" she asked.

"It is a pain I have," he said. "A paltry niggling pain in the head. If I run from it I leave it behind, but it always catches up." He dropped the letter and put his hands to his face, pressing his fingers hard into his flesh. "It comes of a surfeit of apples I ate last year," he said, his voice muffled. "It is nothing. It will pass."

"I had a pain from apples once," she said, feelingly, "but it was in my stomach." She pitied him; with an instinctive movement she touched his bent head. He started as if he had been stung, turning on her with furious bloodshot eyes. She shrank back a little.

"I hate to be touched," he said, for what might have been apology. "Let me be, like a good child. It will pass." He patted her clumsily on the shoulder. After a long while he relaxed, and took a deep breath. "There. It is gone."

"It is a very bad pain," she said in a solemn tone. "I shall ask my mother to make you a poultice for it." He patted her shoulder again. His hands were unused to caresses. "You are a good child," he said, "but do not talk of it, I pray you. It is

enough when it is there, without making a sermon of it when it is away. Shall we read again ? ”

“ No,” she said. “ Tell me—about your fortune.”

“ Woman, woman,” he said quizzically. She did not understand. He clasped his hands about his knees, and stared into the future. “ Well, I will tell you,” he said. “ I am to make a stir in the world. Oh yes, I have it in me to do that, I know. I have no white charger to ride on, and my lance shall be a quill—like this—from a goose’s wing. I shall not tilt at windmills, but at the baseness and folly of man—and by heaven I shall never lack for those.” He made a little sound, half laugh and half groan. “ But first I must get my doctorate, which with Sir William’s help will not be long. And then for London—London——” He paused; and said very low, as if to himself, “ Churchmen have ruled kingdoms before now.”

“ I think you are very silly,” the little girl said calmly.

He came out of his dream slowly, like a man who has walked through a cobweb, with its tenuous web still about him. Because of it, he forgot the disparity of their ages, and answered her like another child.

“ Much you know about it,” he said. “ What is so silly then ? ”

“ You are silly,” she told him. “ Mother says, never ask for too much, and you will always get your wish.” She repeated this with the wise air of a little old woman.

“ And do I want too much ? ” he asked, amused.

“ You want a lady,” she said, “ and a white charger, and windmills, and kingdoms. And you eat too many apples and get a pain.” She gave him a tender smile because she was sorry about the pain, and he stared at her oddly.

“ Babes and sucklings,” he said at last. “ Here is wisdom. Yet what is wisdom but a house you leave too early and enter again too late ? I am what I am and what I must be. I have a journey to go on that I cannot put off. But still at the end of a journey it is a pleasant thing to have a house to repair to, and a friend waiting in it.” He looked down at her with a friendly look. “ If I build that house, will you keep it and wait for me ? ”

“ May I ? ” she said. She clapped her hands in delight.

“ Come,” he said. “ Let us go and see if we can begin it.”

He jumped up and gave her his hand to rise.

The young man and the little girl went off together through the orchard. They receded down the avenue between the trees. The Dean sat and watched them go. The breeze came down out of the branches in a rain of frilly petals which blotted them out. Again it stirred the letter, lying forgotten; then, taking a decision, lifted it by one corner and whirled it away, protesting, into the dappled shadow of the years. Time's petals whirled about his head; their scent, fragrant and elusive, titillated his nostrils for a brief eternity; then it was gone.

"Why do you remind me of all this?" he asked, hoarsely. "Why? You read me a lesson then: would you school me again now?" He cleared his throat with a harsh sound.

"You are always looking for lessons, Jonathan," Stella said. "Yet how many did you ever learn?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I have been thinking of Moor Park," she said. "I don't know why. I thought you would like to think of it too. It was a happy house. You were happy there, were you not?"

"Maybe I was," he said unwillingly. "I cannot tell."

"You cannot now because you will not," she said. "You were happy. But if you had been asked then there would not even have been a doubt. You would have said no. That is all the lesson there is in it. Happiness wants only to be recognized."

"And you would have me believe I am happy now, and do not know it?" he said, sneering. "I am to learn happiness by rote?"

She looked at him sadly, but said nothing. He sat dejected in his chair. "Do you know why I came to-day?" he said at last. "I came to ask your pardon." She moved as if she were about to speak, but he did not pause. "For what? I tell you before God I do not know. I have committed no crime, unless being born into this—dismal bedlam of a world be counted one. Do you hold me accountable for that? I was born into poverty, and reared on charity; separated from my mother, and bred up among strangers who pitied me, until pity grew sour with years, and they would have no more of me. Am I to blame for that, or the father whose loins conceived me? I have cursed him for

it, and would have cursed him to his face if he had lived. But he died; let him go then. I lived."

His lips twisted. "I—fell in love—with Jane Waring." The words seemed to be wrung from him. "I have not thought of her for years, until you remind me of her now. She would not have me. I would have married her"—his voice grated—"that sickly whining image of a woman. But she would not have me. I was a boy, hot and foolish. I argued. I pleaded—and grew into reason. It was an escape for which I thanked God daily. I resolved never to marry. I would bring no son into the world to fight it as I had to do, to eat by charity, to live by cringing, to creep if he would climb. If I could not win a competence I would never marry. I would never know a woman. I never have. And now I come to ask your pardon. For what? Tell me for what? Not for all this—you have known it all along. For what then?"

He stared at her out of sunken eyes that saw nothing. "Reason," he said bitterly. "All my life I have tried to follow reason, and this is where it brings me."

"But this is not reason," she cried out. "It is—it is—I do not know what it is. You are frightening me, Jonathan. All these years I have watched you, admired you. I have not wholly understood you, but I have been sure there was a greatness about you that would lead you to greatness. I have asked nothing for myself. I have been happy to wait, thinking perhaps—but now—you frighten me. You have got somewhere I cannot follow, and it is not reason that has brought you there. What is this you call reason? You have made your own mind a god to worship, and your flesh a devil to crush under your feet. But the mind was meant to live in flesh, Jonathan. You cannot separate them." She bit her lip, painfully. "I think I am talking nonsense," she said in a more restrained tone. "I am no philosopher, and I am tired, tired. I want to help you, but I cannot if you will not help me. I cannot grant pardon if you will not tell me what you have done that is wrong. If you say nothing, I must believe you. But then there is no need for pardon. There is something, Jonathan. What is it, my dear? What is it?"

"I have told you I do not know," he said dully. "I have done nothing. I only know that I have come to hate myself,

and hating myself, have hurt you. I ask your pardon for that. You did not come, and I was glad. I could hate myself and you, and the whole world together. Then when Sheridan told me you were ill, I felt—— Stella, my little Stella, it would have been better for you if you had never known me. I am only fit to rot, and rot, and rot.” He covered his face with his hands.

She leaned forward. “Jonathan,” she said urgently. “Jonathan, listen to me.” He dropped his hands, but did not look up. Her breathing was fast and shallow. “This cannot go on. You must not think of yourself so. You—Oh, why cannot we be as we were?” She broke off, turning her head sharply away.

“As we were?” he said. “It is a poor thing when——” He looked up and saw that she was weeping. “Stella,” he said. He got to his feet, and went to her, standing at a loss, shifting his feet awkwardly, fingering his lip. “Stella.” He struck his right fist violently into the palm of his left hand. “May God forgive me,” he said, in something like his normal tone. “You are ill, and I, that came to plead forgiveness for making you so—what must I do but rant and rave, and make you cry.” He began to stride up and down, his coat-tails swinging at each turn. “I came to ask you to come away. Sheridan has offered his house in the country—I have forgot the name of the place. ’Tis little more than a hovel, I doubt, being Tom’s, but it is out of the world where we have grown old.” He sat down near her. “Shall we go, Stella? As we were, you said. We can be as we were, there. We can forget what I am, and think again of what I was going to be. We can make of it that house I was going to build, and Stella can be its housekeeper. Shall we go?”

She began to smile at him, in spite of herself, wiping away the tears with the ends of her fingers. “And Rebecca,” he said, swivelling his chair. “What do you say, Rebecca?”

Mrs. Dingley was sleeping, very comfortably, in her chair in the window. He looked back to Stella, comically. But she had turned her face away, again.

Chapter Ten

They went to Quilca on a day of light rain, under a sky veiled in gauzy grey. Mrs. Brent stood on the steps to see them go: the two ladies in a hired coach, the Dean on horseback, with Robert Blakely as outrider. Sheridan and Delany waved from the pavement; a few casual onlookers stared with mouths innocently open at the cavalcade.

They clattered through the streets of Dublin and into a region of poor small fields, broken fences and ditches choked with weeds. Everything was of a melancholy wetness, damping to the spirits. The windows of the coach were raised: it might have been empty; Swift rode grimly silent; the moisture, gathering on the brim of his hat, coalesced continually at the exact centre, into a drop which bobbed and bobbed and bobbed, and then fell, to be replaced by another. He held his cloak about him, and was too warm; all his clothes felt damply clinging; his skin crawled with discomfort. He had pressed the arrangements, hurried their departure, so that even now Stella had sunk back in the coach and closed her eyes, with a hand at her bosom. At the last moment he had looked in at her white face, and asked with a sudden compunction, if she felt strong enough to travel. "Yes, yes," she had said through pale lips. "I shall be better soon. I want to go. The country will make me well again." It had seemed important to be away, a matter of extremest urgency, and now—he felt as though he were riding to a funeral, rather than setting out on a holiday: the urgency had gone, the excitement melted, the importance become as tangible as the smoke of rain that clung about the far hills. He even felt reluctance at leaving the Deanery House, an odd thing, in view of the passionate revulsion with which he had come to it. Now it was home, its rooms familiar, its windows frames for pictures the more valuable because well known; a place where pain was more bearable,

and disappointments the more easily met, because the very chairs were tried friends.

Friends. First, Stella. Then Arbuthnot, and Pope, and Gay, over the sea; Addison, gone before that when party came between; Harley and Bolingbroke, for whose friendship he was exiled—all gone. And now Sheridan? Delany? Not friends in the old sense. Now no one; only this coach, creaking and bucketting over the rutted track, closed like a hearse, blind like a prison van. Stella, travelling the same road, bound for the same goal, yet shut away and closed off from him, as if providence intended her, too, to be forbidden him.

The window of the coach, on the side nearest to him, was lowered. Dingley's head appeared, nodding fantastically with the labouring springs. She spoke, but he could not hear a word. He reined his horse nearer, bending over towards her. She said something quite inaudible. He raised his crop and tapped the coachman on the arm. The coach ground to a standstill.

"What is it?" he asked. "I could hear nothing."

"I said I thought we should stop a little," she repeated. "And maybe eat a mouthful. Hetty is tired, and I don't wonder, sick as she is. This road—I'm sure we might just as well have been chasing foxes across fields. I dare swear I am bruised from——"

He cut her short. "Stop here?" he asked. "There is nothing to stop for here." She stuck her head through the window, looked quickly before and behind, and withdrew it again. "I daresay 'tis as good a place as any other," she said. "I don't suppose there's so much as a change house within miles. In any case, we wouldn't wish to alight"—she disappeared, but her voice went on—"would we, Hetty?"—she came into view again—"no, just sit a moment and rest." She beckoned him nearer, and said in a penetrating whisper, "Her head aches so, poor thing." She nodded, as if in confirmation. He looked at her doubtfully.

"Well," he said. He peered down the road in front of them. "About half a mile more, and there is a house of a sort. Let us go there. We might find some warm milk."

She considered this. Without waiting for her assent, he instructed the coachman: "You, fellow. Drive on as far as the house, there. Slowly."

They came to the house, four walls, a hole for a window, a door of rotten boards. Weeds grew luxuriant in the thatch, in one end of which was another hole. A curl of smoke, flattened by the rain, drooped from it. Swift eyed the place with distaste.

"Get down," he said to Robert. "Get down and see if anyone is in—if indeed it is more than a pigstye."

The man knocked at the door. It opened, and a white scrawny hen stepped out, picking its way over the mud with ridiculous dignity. A woman appeared. She was tall, but very thin, her complexion yellowish with a high flush on the cheek-bones, hair and brows black as night. She leaned against the door-post and looked at them insolently out of blue eyes. She said nothing.

"There is a sick lady in the coach," Robert said. "If you had such a thing as a drop of warm milk——"

She smiled, showing a mouthful of rotten blackened teeth. She pushed back her hair with a dirty hand. "A sick lady, is it?" she said in a hoarse voice, and coughed terrifyingly, pressing her hand to her chest. It seemed as though the cough might pick her up and whirl her away like a gale of wind, but at last it stopped. She spat out of the door. "We have nothing," she said. A child's face appeared round her skirt; peeping shyly out of the same blue eyes in the same parchment skin. She dropped her hand to the child's head, holding it to her absently. "Sickness a plenty," she said, "we have that. But milk—— You've eyes in your heads." Her contempt was blistering.

"If it's payment you want," Robert began.

"Payment?" she said. She threw her head back and laughed without making a sound. "Payment? Do you think if we had anything to sell we should not have sold it long since?" She stared up at Swift. "Do you see anything you'd care to give a copper for, my fine gentleman? Myself now? I doubt I'm not worth your money. Or the child?" She swung the child round from behind her, so that it let out a cry and clutched at her. "A shilling for a fine boy?—'tis all I have."

Swift reined his horse about roughly. "Come, Robert," he said.

Stella's voice from inside the coach said, "Wait a moment,"

and a man came round the corner of the house. He was bent under a clumsy hod piled high with new-cut turf. He rested this against the wall and straightened himself. His ribs were outlined under his wet shirt, his thin bare shanks ended in enormous clogs, clotted with mud.

"What is it?" he said to the woman.

"They're asking for milk," she said disdainfully. "For a sick lady. Milk. From us."

He drew his forearm across his brow. "Well now," he said. "That's a pity. If a sup of buttermilk would be doing the lady any good——"

The woman laid hold of him by the shoulder. "You fool," she said. "Come away inside."

He shook her off. "Whisht, woman," he said. "Have you no manners? Fetch out a cup of buttermilk. And see the cup is clean."

She looked at him for a moment, then went inside without a word. He came up to the coach. "It's sorry I am," he said through the window, "I've nothing better to offer. But buttermilk's a wholesome drink, if without much body to it." The woman came out with an earthenware cup. He took it, and handed it up to the coach.

"I thank you, sir," Stella said. "I would not take it from you, but—I have my manners, too." She drank. "It is very good," she said, and gave him back the cup. "Times are hard, are they not?"

"Aye," he said. "They are that. And getting worse, seemingly. I had a farm once, a good farm, though you might not think it. Now—my last field's gone, two months back, and the sheep'll be in it soon, no doubt. And I must make shift to grow potatoes in the bog—if you will tell me how." He sighed. "Hard times, surely."

"I am sorry," she said. "And now will you do me another favour—take this for the child." She sat back in her seat.

He stared at the coin in his hand. "But—but this is gold," he said, as if he could not believe it. "Gold—and I have not seen even copper in a twelvemonth." He was still calling down blessings in the names of a dozen saints as they drew away. Swift rode level with the coach.

"For the child," he said. "And the man and woman will

drink themselves stupid to-night." He could see Stella smile at him through the window, and bent to hear her reply.

"If I had not given it him," she said. "You would have done."

He only said roughly: "Do you feel more yourself?"

"Can I see that woman and think myself ill?" she said. "She—she was dying on her feet."

"Aye," he said. "And so is Ireland. God help the country where a fat sheep is more than a man—and the men no more than sheep."

She smiled again. Suddenly, for some reason he could not name, his spirit sang.

They lay that night at a poor place, part inn, part farm, all broken down; the beds verminous, the food ill-cooked, the servants mere labourers from the fields. The Dean's good humour persisted through it all; he roared, but temperately; Robert bustled about with his normal quiet effectiveness, and in the result they fared reasonably well. The wine, at any rate, was good, though muddy; it was a bottle of their own from Swift's store in the boot of the coach, and could not be brought to settle in time.

They were glad enough to start the next morning, under the same soft drapery of cloud. The rain persisted day-long. It was like riding through a vapour of water, suspended in the air rather than falling. At three in the afternoon they had two hours more before them, and the Dean began to speculate on the end of their journey. A last remark of Sheridan's, imperfectly heard in the fuss of their departure, buzzed around his head like an importunate fly. The words escaped him; the sound was all that remained—something as though the young man, at the final moment, had been stricken with regret; or not regret, doubt rather—doubt of his wisdom in sending them to Quilca at all. In retrospect the sound was ominous.

The driveway, when they came to it, gave no happy augury. There were no gates between the stone pillars, and the little lodge was empty. The surface beneath the carriage wheels was even worse than the road had been; branches hung untended over the path, dragging wet fingers across a rider's face; the horses slipped and stumbled. The front of the house was

unwelcoming, the windows empty, with here and there a pane broken. The great door was closed, and one end of the façade appeared to be falling into ruin.

Swift surveyed the place. He sat grimly, his expression unreadable. Robert knocked on the door; it gave out a dull impenetrable sound. He knocked again, and looked back, upwards, at Swift. "Again," the latter said. "And harder." The man beat a tattoo. At the end, a voice behind the door said: "Who is it?"

"It is Dean Swift," Robert said. "Is he not expected? Open the door."

"I cannot," the voice said. "You will have to come round the back."

"What's that he says?" Swift asked.

Robert turned a flushed face. "Begging your honour's pardon," he said. "It was something—about the back door."

Swift stared a moment, dismounted deliberately; ascended the two shallow steps. He put his head close to the door. "You there," he said quietly, "scoundrel: will you open? Or must we——"

"I tell you I cannot," the voice said. "The hinges are broke. It will not budge. You must either come round through the garden or stay outside."

There was a short silence, then the Dean said with a restraint that was almost frightening: "Which way? And what of the coach?"

"To the left," the voice said, "through the little gate. The coach can drive round."

He turned without a word. "Drive round to the yard," he said to the coachman. He made his way down the steps and along the front of the house, followed by Robert. The rain drifted gently down; it lay in shallow pools on the gravel; the unkempt lawn looked green and dangerous, as though one step from the path might drop the unwary up to his chin in mud and sucking weeds. They came to the little gate, a door in the wall overhung with dripping creeper, opening reluctantly with a rasping groan. This led through a passage to an enclosed courtyard, paved with stone but overlaid with muck and reeking of pigs. The house ran along two sides of the yard, stables along

the third, and the fourth, in which was a gateless opening, was a wall lined with trees.

Halfway down the nearest side, a door stood open. A man smiled and bowed on the doorstep, exhibiting the bald patch on the top of his tousled head. He had a slinking look; his stockings were wrinkled, the apron about his middle stained and foul.

"Doctor Swift?" he said ingratiatingly. "Your reverence is—Doctor Swift?"

"That you will find out," Swift said in his smoothest tone. "Presently."

The man looked from Swift to Robert and back again. "Your honour has taken us by surprise," he said, doubtfully. "We did not expect you now that it is grown so late, or I would have had the door open. You are welcome to Quilca, sir."

"So I had observed," Swift said, "that, and the surprise, too."

The coach turned into the yard. The coachman was down at the horses' heads. They slithered and slid; he fought with them, heaving and blowing, grumbling loudly in little spurts of words. He was mired above the ankles.

"Over here," Swift said. "And you two, lift the ladies over this—dung-heap." Robert and the man in the apron lifted first Rebecca, and then Stella from the coach, and deposited them in the house. "See to the baggage and the horses," Swift said to Robert. "And be easy with the wine. And now, sirrah, lead the way."

A dark passage, smelling of mould, and a short uncarpeted stair, brought them to a room with a low ceiling, crossed by black beams; panelled walls, and two small windows with dirty panes. There was an oak table, a few chairs, and a couch before the hearth, in which there was no fire, but a heap of white ash.

"The dining-room," the man in the apron announced.

"Ah," Swift said. "It wakes my appetite merely to be in it." He settled Stella and Mrs. Dingley on the couch, and stood before the fireplace. "Now," he said, "before these ladies go to their rooms, let us see the servants. There are three, are there not?"

"There are, sir," the man said. "Will I be fetching them?"

"How shall we see them if you do not?" Swift said. "Fetch them, quickly." He stood waiting, saying nothing, rocking

gently on his heels. He found Stella's eyes upon him, large and dark in her white face, strained with fatigue. He looked down at his feet.

"Jonathan," she said, "please——"

"Hush," he said. "There is no need to say it. I am not angry." He glanced at her sideways. "And you cannot be more surprised than I am," he added. She smiled, and relaxed into the corner of the couch. The door opened, and the man in the apron ushered in two women, the first a blowsy slattern, shapeless as a sack of meal; the second a shy girl, who stood with her hands behind her, tracing patterns on the floor with her bare foot. Swift gave them the full benefit of his stare. The man coughed nervously; the woman stared back, unabashed.

"So," he said at last. "Your names, if you please."

"I am William," the man said eagerly. "And this is Sheelah, and this Molly." The fat woman dipped a clumsy curtsy, the girl watched her own great toe, with its blackened nail. "There is the boy Robin, too, but he is bringing in the cows."

"Very well," Swift said. "Now listen to me. I am here at Doctor Sheridan's invitation, to consider his house as my own. While I am here that is what I shall do. Doctor Sheridan is an easy man; I am not so easy. I require from my servants obedience first, and courtesy, and then cleanliness and quiet manners. If I get those, we shall do together very well; if I do not—you will find out what I am." He paused. "To-morrow then, the house shall be cleaned. For to-night, fires in these ladies' rooms, and another here; and some food. What have you in the larder?" He looked from one to the other.

"There is a mould of brawn," Sheelah said in a fat husky voice, "and some pig's knuckles, and half a bacon pie——"

"That will do," Swift said, "we shall not starve. We will have what there is; and some warm milk for the ladies, and a mug of small beer for myself. You have beer in the house?"

"We have that, sir," William said.

"Yes," Swift said. "I thought you would have." The man looked at him suspiciously, but his face was immovable. "And now, you—Molly, is it?—these ladies to their rooms. You, slut—the food. And you, sirrah—the fires. Quickly now." His tone stirred them to sudden activity. "I will see you before

you retire," he said to Stella as they went out. "If these rascals do not serve you well, send me word." She touched his hand. When they had gone he sat down before the dead hearth. He was still sitting there when Robert came in. "Will I make up this fire, sir?" the man said. He nodded without speaking, and Robert went down on his knees in the chimney breast, to rake among the ashes.

He dropped the poker with a clatter.

"What now?" Swift said. "Must you——?"

"I'm sorry, your honour," Robert said. "It startled me when I saw it move. The cat has kittened in behind here. Look." He held up a morsel of fur, weakly kicking.

The Dean looked. He shrugged his shoulders. "Well," he said, "it is as well that something should know where to be comfortable in this sty. Let them be." Robert hesitated. "I said let them be. I am not cold." The man replaced the kitten and went out, looking back over his shoulder, puzzled.

The next morning the rain held off, though the sky was watery. Swift was about early, too early for that house. It was he roused the servants, who had grown used to lying late. He wore old clothes, and was booted to the knees. During the morning he was everywhere; peering into the larder, laying out his wine in the cellar, with Robert holding a candle. He opened the oven doors, counted the kitchenware, noted there was no roasting spit on the hearth. He went round the stables, and surprised the boy Robin milking the cows at turned eleven o'clock. He found there was no turf cut for fires, and at noon headed a foray into the bog, where they splashed about for two hours in black slimy pools, gathering up the bottoms of old clamps. That was all they could do, for there was no spade to cut more, though they brought back with them the missing spit, rusted and bent, the point blunted, through poking into the peat for sunken timber.

Returning at two in the afternoon, and entering by the kitchen door, he came upon a rural scene. The benches down either side of the kitchen table were filled with a tag-rag of men and women, eating and drinking; some were singing. All sounds ceased as he went in; he was confronted by two rows of dirty faces, the mouths in which, where they were not too full,

were open. He stood at the door and looked back at them. He rubbed his hands together.

"Sheelah?" he said gently. The woman stood forward. "I thought we had a staff of four—with Robert, five? And three of them out with me: yet now, one, two"—he counted elaborately—"thirteen, fourteen? Or is it my arithmetic at fault?"

"No, your honour," the woman said, breathily. "'Tis—'tis the neighbours, come in for a bite and a sup. Sure, your honour, times is hard——"

"Aye," he said, nodding kindly, "hard indeed, and will be harder." He addressed the table at large. "The good days are over, neighbours," he said. "The horn of plenty is run dry. You will oblige me by going, and even more by not coming back. Unless it is charity that is in question: in which case you may apply to my man Robert Blakely, at ten in the forenoon Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Otherwise—out, you dogs. Be gone and do your thieving elsewhere." They fled. When they had all gone, he said to Sheelah: "I do not wish this to happen again. You understand?" Robert, watching from the door, shivered. He found this moderation uncanny.

Stella came down about five, to a cheerful fire in the dining-room; the windows cleaned, though a little smeary, and the Dean sitting at the table writing. He greeted her almost eagerly, fetching a cushion for her back, a stool for her feet. "How are you now, my dear," he said. "Have you slept well? And is your room properly comfortable?"

She stopped him, laughing. "I am much better already," she said. "The quiet is blessed, after Ormonde Quay; and any bed would seem of down after two days in that unspeakable coach. It is true the fire had to be let out, the chimney smoked so, and there is a hole in the floor, but then I have blankets, and the hole will not incommode me if I do not walk over it."

He nodded with a humorous look. "If that is all, you are not badly off," he said. "I have a draught that threatens to lift me off the bed, and two damnable iron spikes on the bedstead set there especially to break my shins each time I get out and in. Still, I will add your chimney to my list"—he rose and went back to the table—"and we will see what can be done. The worst thing will be," he said, writing, "if I come to the end of my paper before I set down all there is to do." He put back

the pen in the ink. "Tom Sheridan and his Quilca," he said, "poor Tom. The servants idle thieves, the house falling into pieces, and the crops—I have not had time to look at the fields, but with this weather, and no heart in the work, I dread what I shall see when I do. It is lucky we came."

"You are not sorry then?" she said.

"Sorry?" he said. "No. I am glad, though I could not tell you why."

"Perhaps it is easier to set Quilca to rights than to right the whole world," she said. Her eyes were tender.

"Maybe," he said, sighing. "Do you remember this was to be the house I should have built? It is worthy of me, is it not? Do you smile?"

"If I do," she said, "it is from happiness. I like it here, Jonathan. Need we go back?"

"We need not think of it now," he said. "Let us make a compact, to forget Dublin and all that is in it." He stared at the fire, his brow clouded. "You do not know how I have hated that town," he said. "The wretched stinking streets, that great house, the people, and most of all myself for being there."

"Do you think I could be with you and not know?" she asked.

"You could not know," he told her. "I do not think there has ever been a brain like mine, for hating. I have shuddered, looking into my own mind. And when we—fell out——"

"Why did we fall out, Jonathan?" she asked.

"I could not bear it," he said. "Then I was truly alone——"

"But you do not answer me," she cried. "This is something I cannot bear—for you to be dishonest with me, dishonest with yourself. Surely we can talk, we have always talked. You have told me everything, but now——" She stopped momentarily, and then: "Listen, Jonathan," she said. She had taken a resolution. "I am going to ask you a question that you must answer. You have changed to me. Yes, you have—and I know the day, I know the very hour from which you changed. It was when I spoke to you of—Jonathan, who is Vanessa? Is she—the reason?"

He sat very still, while she waited, leaning forward a little. "She is Hester Van Homrigh," he said at last, his voice flat,

"I knew her mother in London. I wrote you of them." She nodded. "Hessy was a little girl. I liked her. She—she put me in mind of another—little girl I had known—" He cleared his throat and looked up. "Her mother, the widow, is dead now, and the daughter has come to Ireland on business of the estate she was left. I have visited her. That is all."

"You have never spoken of it," she said.

"Why should I?" he replied. "It was not—I do many things not worth speaking of."

"Why has she not visited you?" she asked. "Why have I never met her?"

"Why, why, why," he said. "I do not know. Maybe she thinks—maybe she feels—"

"I know," she said quietly, "I know how she would feel. But you, Jonathan—" she brought her hands together. "Tell me plainly. Do you love her?"

"You ask me that?" he said. "Me?"

"I know you too, Jonathan," she said. "And still I ask."

"Then if I must answer—no," he said with a curious hard vehemence. "And no again and for ever. You know me, you say. Do you think I could be so false—even to myself? Love—that love you speak of—sickens me. Body to body in foul surrender, the hot breath, the sweaty hands, the mind abdicated and the brute enthroned—I could vomit at the thought." He made a sweeping gesture with both his hands. "I could not bear it—the chains about me," he ended more moderately, and rose and went to sit beside her on the couch. "Does that satisfy you?"

"Does it satisfy you, Jonathan?" she asked in reply. He did not understand her. "You make your own chains, my dear," she said. "I have told you before. You go out of your way to look for unhappiness, while happiness sits neglected on the doorstep and you will not let it in."

"I look for neither one nor the other," he said. "Happiness, unhappiness—they are all one, like the weather—I never remember any that was not too hot, or too cold, or too wet, or too dry, but however God Almighty contrives it, at the end of the year 'tis very well. So with a man: happy or unhappy, when the time comes he dies, and that also is very well. But while he lives he is too oddly compounded of this and that to be

any one thing long. The greatest happiness he can aspire to is change, change and flux so that he may have something else to do than dwell upon his own imperfections."

"But is not that what I am telling you?" she took him up. "And yet you spend your life struggling to tie yourself into one rigid consistency."

"Aye," he said. "I was always a poor hand to take advice, even my own. God knows why I was given reason, since I cannot use it." He sat silent for a moment, and then said: "I am coming to be an old man, and out of all these years I have got but one thing I know for certain; and that is, that I cannot do without you near me. I am sure there is no greater folly than to enter into too strict a partnership or friendship, whose loss must make a man absolutely miserable, especially at an age when it is too late to engage in a new friendship. Yet there it is. Without you I am worse than dead: I am dead with life still in me."

"Well." She attempted to laugh, uncertainly. "And what must I say to so charming a compliment?"

"I did not mean to tell you, yet," he said. "But now it is out. Now you have it."

"Have it?" she said. "Have what? The knowledge that you think yourself a fool in being my friend?"

"You asked me to be honest," he said. "I have tried. I have told you that without you there is nothing for me. I am telling you now, that in my own poor way I—love you. I am asking you, if you will, to be my wife."

She stood up. "No," she said sharply. "This is too much." She put a hand to her throat. "I cannot bear it."

"I shall not be surprised if you refuse," he said, patiently. "It is not much to offer a woman. You would have my name, and the little respect it carries with it. If I should die, you would have enough to live on, and no malicious tongue could doubt you had the right. And—it would answer all your questions."

"Yes." She looked down at his bent head, fixedly, as though she would read his very soul. Blood flushed her cheeks, and faded again. "It would, would it not?" The words were just audible. She turned and walked to the window. "I cannot answer—now," she whispered without looking round.

"Of course not," he said. "I did not mean to speak of it yet. But you will think of it?"

She did not reply, nor move. He hesitated, then went out, quietly. She put both hands on the window-ledge, and so stood, her arms rigid, as if but for their support she would have slipped to the ground.

Chapter Eleven

A new era had opened at Quilca; almost a new creation. Life before had followed the slow rule of Nature; each day, the sun rose; then, some time after, as hunger grew, Sheelah, or Molly or William, would rise also and begin to prepare breakfast. Next, a crack by the kitchen fire, with prayers for rain, which, Swift wrote to Sheridan, "entertains them at cards and sleep, which are much lighter than spades, sledges, and crows." Finally, when the anguished lowing of the cows was no longer to be borne, the boy Robin would be driven out, protesting, to milk them. The day might then be said to have begun.

Now all was changed. A time-table, in the Dean's neat script, hung in the kitchen, laying down the order in which the household duties were to be done, and the time set for each. Only the man William could read; for all the effect the time-table had, he might as well have been as ignorant as the rest. '8 a.m.: Fresh milk for Mrs. Johnson,' one item ran; the Dean chose to regard this as essential for Stella's health, and about it raged what he called the milky battle, *bellum lactæum*. The fortunes of war swung this way and that; for a day or so his will would prevail, then nine o'clock would come, and no milk, and ten, and no milk; and he would throw himself once more into the struggle, "perpetually storming, and in danger of losing all his flesh, or sinking into barbarity for the sake of peace."

That was typical. For the first weeks, while summer came up to and passed its peak, and still it rained, the house was filled

with the perpetual storm of his activity, the roaring gale of his good humour. The roof was mended, leaked, and was mended again; the rooms were cleansed one by one; he even began negotiations with a master mason from Kells for the completion of the front of the house, which owed its ruined look to an extension begun and left unfinished, like most things Sheridan set his hand to. But sooner or later everything came back to Stella, Stella's health, Stella's comfort. If he had the great front door off its hinges and made to open, it was so that Stella might go into the garden without paddling through the muck of the yard; if he had the lawn cut, bit by bit, when the rain momentarily held off, it was so that Stella might walk on it when it should be fine.

It was as though he felt her eyes upon him all the time, questioning him; in fact, she considered him often, sitting in her chair while her strength came back to her; her expression, if she were caught unawares, puzzled, doubting. Ordinarily such sustained attention would have angered him, but now he seemed to admit, tacitly, her right to doubt, and to be determined to prove to her, in his own way, the extent of his devotion. He made no further reference to his declaration: indeed, he got no opportunity, for where Rebecca Dingley had before been ubiquitous, she was now doubly so, and hardly left Stella's side. But though this was largely Stella's doing, it pleased him too; his whole manner was one of affectionate railery, from which sentiment could not be further removed. As the weather began gradually to mend, and he was able to be more out of doors, he presented her with a light pickaxe against the time when she should be able to join him. It had a handle of cherry wood, with a Latin verse cut upon it, and had been specially made to his order in Dublin. "Mistress Johnson is so pleased with her pickaxe," he told Sheridan, who had forwarded it to Quilca, "that she wears it fastened to her girdle on the left side, in balance with her watch. The lake is strangely overflown," he went on, "and we are desperate about turf, being forced to buy it three miles off. You would wonder what carking and caring there is among us for small beer and lean mutton, and starved lamb, and stopping gaps, and driving cattle from the corn. In that we are all-to-be-Dingleyed."

Perhaps as a result of the prevailing damp, with the draught in his bedroom as a contributory cause, he caught a slight cold, bringing back the old deafness. Even this cast no shadow on his spirits; on occasion he exaggerated it for his own purposes. A neighbour called on them, Kilpatrick by name, a young man with cropped carrotty hair and a face almost the same colour, to which tufted white eyebrows lent an expression of idiotic surprise. He arrived in some state, attended by a couple of loping villainous dogs, and preceded by a man bearing his cloak. The squire's boots were ornamented with tarnished silver spurs, the man's brogues heavy with crusted cow-dung, of which he left a generous portion on the doorstep when he knocked for his master. The whole mixture of dignity and dirt appealed irresistibly to Swift's sense of the ridiculous; his deafness became acute, and he sat mum while Stella offered the young man tea, staring with open mouth at the latter's manœuvres with his tea-cup and gazing blankly from one to the other as though completely at a loss to understand what was passing. As a result, Stella's attempts at conversation tailed off into a constrained silence: her face grew redder and redder until it nearly matched the squire's. Only Rebecca rattled comfortably on, of the weather and the superiority of life in Dublin to anything the country could offer; while the other three sat and gaped at each other like a company of imbeciles, newly met. But when the young man, with a frightful effort, took his leave, Swift rose too, and holding him warmly by the hand, pressed him to come again; which, obviously much flattered, he promised to do.

The Dean came back from the door in high fettle. "That is an excellent good fellow," he said as he came in, "and plainly——"

"Your behaviour was disgusting," Stella said.

"—interested in you," he went on, ignoring her. "A likely suitor, I should say. Now why do you not——"

"Disgusting," she said, more loudly. "And now you are absurd, too."

There was surprise in his look. "Oh, come," he said blandly. "A very modest, good-natured young man, I thought him, and neither disgusting nor absurd. Of course I could not hear what passed between you, but I could tell from your blushes your own interest was——"

"Will you stop?" she asked.

"Very well," he said. "Deny it, if you are set on it. But I appeal to Rebecca. Now, Rebecca, be truthful. What did you think?"

Mrs. Dingley rested her hands in her lap. "Well," she said. She reflected a moment. "He's rather young, and then again——"

"There," Swift broke in. "You see?" He drew in his cheeks. Stella looked at him indignantly—and began unwillingly to laugh. She laughed till the tears came.

He was enjoying himself as he had not done since his return to Ireland. He was back on the old footing with Stella—or better. He was to have his way, and on his terms. He had no doubt about that: he had made a decision, and when his own mind was made up, he was apt to consider any matter settled, every difficulty overcome. Other people's conflicts, other people's decisions, amounted then to little in his thoughts.

So now he thought little of Vanessa. He had advised her to find a husband—that would have been the easiest way of all. But she would not; so now, in due course, he would see her and tell her he himself was to marry. This gave him an illusory feeling of safety, as though the irrevocability of the marriage vows offered some kind of shelter, signalling and underlining his choice so solemnly that she could not but accept it and argue no more.

At any rate, the present was good, and he was content to live in it. He had a letter from Proby; the young captain had been released and transferred to another regiment, and the father sent his ingenuous thanks to the Dean as the man who had made this possible. He was touched and pleased—pleased to have done the favour, more pleased to find he still had the power to do favours. But this was not all. Almost the next day came news from Sheridan, that he had been granted the living of Rincurran in the County of Cork. This letter was all but incoherent with joy. Swift replied at once: "You run out of your time so merrily, that you are forced to anticipate it like a young heir that spends his fortune faster than it comes in; for your letter is dated to-morrow, and God knows when it was writ, or what Saturday you mean, but I suppose it is the next. You

are an unlucky devil to get a living the furthest in the kingdom from Quilca"—and so on, with many exhortations, to act like a man of the world, to take advice for once, to flatter the bishop monstrously upon his learning and his writings—"you have read his book against Toland a hundred times, and his sermons (if he has printed any) have been always your model, etc."

It would have been hard to say which was the most excited, Sheridan in Dublin, or Swift, or Stella. Preferment for the Dean himself could not have given him greater pleasure, and so at dinner and all the afternoon, and again at supper, the debate went on, Swift constantly getting to his feet, walking up and down the room, making a note on his tablets, and walking again.

"He is no better than a child," he said once. "I have told him a thousand times he should get some knowledge of tithes and church livings. But no, he would sooner loll a-bed till noon to read Homer——"

"He can learn," Stella said. "There is still time——"

"Little time and much to learn," Swift said. "Much, much—the extent of the parish, the general quantity of arable land and pasture——" He sat down at the table and wrote, muttering. "Common rates of tithe for different sorts of corn; fleeces and lambs; is there any glebe?—and then wool and lamb are only due in spring—or do they, I wonder, belong to his predecessor——?"

"You would make him a farmer," Stella said. "There are more important things, that need no learning, but only a little sense. Temperance, for one, or at any rate, the appearance of it——"

"You are right," Swift said.

"—and economy. There is no need now for him to be ashamed to be thought poor——"

"There is that wife of his," Swift said grimly. "And the brats—if I hear of one rag of better clothes bought for either before he is settled——" He threw down his pen. "As if youth itself were not sufficient encumbrance," he burst out. "He has to hang a wife and four children about his neck. Well, God send the thought of them may sober him—though I doubt he is too great a fool."

Stella laughed. "Poor Tom. You are too hard on him, Jonathan," she said. "After all, he has wit——"

"And would be better without it," he declared. "He had better be grave, and formal, and stupid; snuffle through his nose; keep regular hours and think regular thoughts, and confine his speaking to prayers morning and evening. Do I not know?" He shrugged his shoulders. "But what man's experience ever benefited another? I will write and tell him all this, but in the end, when all's done, he must weather it himself." The letter was duly despatched, and for a time they heard no more of Sheridan.

One day toward the middle of August, Swift passing through the kitchen, came upon Robert Blakely and William in conversation with a stranger. All three were seated round the kitchen table, Robert and William together on the one side, the man opposite on the other. On the table before them were a number of little heaps of coin, silver and copper. They were lost in their discussion, and did not see the Dean. He stood in the doorway and listened.

"But amn't I telling you?" the man said. "They are new minted by order of His Majesty King George, God bless him, who has heard of the lamentable lack of small change on this side the water, and has sent them over of his special kindness——"

Robert waved a hand at him, to silence him. "You have said so three times," he said. "I heard you the first one. 'Tis not that I'm asking. I'm asking you why, if the coin is good, you will give five for four? Why is our twopence worth your twopence ha'penny?"

"And I am trying to tell you that same thing," the man said. "The coin is new, is it not? Very well then. I don't surely need to point out to two gentlemen of your intelligence, with your experience of the world, that the natives of these parts are very likely the ignorantest set of clods ever turned over by a plough? Come, gentlemen"—his voice was like syrup—"we know the vulgar, do we not? Imagine. You go up to Dublin for a new coat, return spick and span and shining, point device in the latest cut, as pretty a figure as ever walked down Sackville Street—and what says Teague? He would stone you, if he durst come near enough. And so with anything new. Should I cast my pearls before such swine? Not I. Being in my

senses, I come to you for help. But help deserves its hire—I would not expect a service for nothing. There is no more to it than that.” He spread dirty hands, and looked at them, smiling softly. Swift, at the door, coughed a little cough.

The stranger was on his feet like lightning. “Your honour,” he said humbly, and bowed low, spreading his coat-tails. “Your honour’s most obedient humble servant.”

“Yours, sir,” the Dean said. He bowed too.

“I have not the privilege of your honour’s name,” the man said.

“’Tis of no consequence,” Swift said. “None at all. You may call me one of the herd.”

He got a suspicious look, and then, “Your honour is pleased to joke,” the man said. He tittered obsequiously. “You cannot think I referred to your honour.”

“Not I,” Swift said heartily. “My wit ran away with me. It was uncivil. Forgive me, pray.” The man bowed again, not sure of himself. “But I take it hardly of these fellows that they did not inform me of your arrival.” His blue glance fell on them chillingly. “To entertain you in the kitchen, of all things. It is abominable. Will you not come into the house?”

“Your honour is too good,” the man said. “I would not disturb you or your good lady. This is a matter of halfpence, and not worth your honour’s ear.”

“Tush, man,” Swift said. “It was the halfpence I was taught to take care of, at my mother’s knee. Come in and entertain us with the latest news. You are fresh from Court?”

“I, sir?” He smirked modestly. “You take me wrongly, I assure you. I am but a poor man, travelling the countryside in a small way of business—a huckster, if you will, sir.”

“A copper huckster with a silver tongue,” Swift said, in friendly raillery. “You are too backward by half. Come—I insist.” Under his eye the man gathered up his piles of shining halfpence, putting them carefully into pockets in the flaps of his long waistcoat. Faintly jingling, he followed the Dean through the dark passages to the parlour, where he stood inside the door blinking and ill at ease. “See, ladies,” Swift said. “I bring you a lucky man, but newly come from England and the company of kings, and bearing gifts and good tidings to the county of Cavan. Mr. ——” he looked enquiringly at the stranger.

"Thistle," the man said, wetting his lips. "Benjamin Thistle and your humble servant." He bent awkwardly.

"Mr. Thistle," Swift said. "Be seated, Mr. Thistle, will you not?"

The man lowered himself to the edge of the chair. The Dean sat too, and surveyed him benevolently, in silence. Stella opened her mouth to speak, caught his glance, and said nothing. Thistle found the quiet too much for him. He clasped his hands together and leaned forward.

"Your honour," he said.

Swift raised his brows at him.

"Your honour is a man of parts," Thistle said. "I'd only to clap eyes on you to see that. Therefore I will be plain. These halfpence are not sent over by the king—not directly."

"Ah," Swift said.

"Don't mistake me now," he said hastily. "I'm no coiner or counterfeiter. A poor honest agent working on commission—that's Benjamin Thistle."

Swift nodded.

"For the rest, the ha'pence are good; true, and new minted under royal patent. I'll not deny there's a certain suspicion to be met—'tis as I said: newness goes down hard with country bumpkins wheresoever." He spread out his hands—"so, I find it suits me best to share my commission with a chosen few. And there your honour has it." He looked about him with more confidence.

Swift nodded again. "A straight tale straightly told," he said. "And may I see your wares?" He took the coin the other held out to him: it lay on the palm of his hand, twinkling plumply. "Pretty, pretty," he said. "A speaking likeness of His Majesty. And on the other side"—he tossed it in the air—"Hibernia herself—with a harp to play upon. Pretty indeed." He spun the coin again, and continued to do so as he spoke. "And the coiner is——?"

"Mr. William Wood of Wolverhampton," Thistle brought it out roundly. Stella glanced at Swift. He was absorbed with his game with the coin.

"I have heard the name," he said softly without looking up. "An ironmonger, is he not?"

"An ironmaster," Thistle said, emphasizing the last word,

and with a tinge of reproof. "He owns mines in thirty-nine counties, and——"

"Some kind of hardwareman," Swift agreed. The coin spun and twinkled. "And he holds the king's patent, too? How got he that?"

"Your honour has me there," Thistle said. He was quite at ease now. "Though they do say the Duchess of Kendall——"

Swift eyed him without raising his head. "So," he said. "Madame von Schulemberg."

"Your honour's pardon," Thistle said. "I didn't catch——?"

"No matter," the Dean said. He closed his hand on the coin, as though with sudden decision, and looked up. "Does it not strike you as a little light? The halfpenny, I mean?"

Thistle was shocked. "Oh no, sir," he said. "It is truly coined, I assure you."

"A little brassy?" Swift said persuasively.

"Sir," the man began, outraged now.

"Oh come, come," Swift said. "I mean no offence. I am interested in the how's and why's. How you can give me five for four, and still make a commission: and why Hardwareman Wood chooses this manner of distribution."

"I cannot say," Thistle said smugly. "'Tis none of my business. All I know is I gave a surety in Cork; I am a poor man, your honour, and could only afford two small kegs, which I have on a packhorse in your yard. My little profit is my sole interest—I leave the rest to Mr. Wood and His Majesty King George."

"Fair enough," Swift said agreeably. "And so you would not be concerned to know," he went on in the same tone, "that I take you to be a damned impudent scoundrel, and little better than a common footpad?"

The man sprang up. "So that's the lay," he said. "I thought there was something, rot me if I didn't. Now look 'ee here, my fine mister: I am breaking no law. I go about my business peaceably, if I am let alone. Interfere with me, and I appeal to the nearest justice——"

"Do you think he could hear you from the middle of my pond?" Swift enquired. He had not moved.

"I can look after myself," Thistle said uglily. He patted the

pocket of his coat. "Don't provoke me, now, with ladies present, too."

"Provoke you, you dog," Swift began.

Robert came into the room. He stood a moment, puzzled, and then said: "Squire Kilpatrick is calling, sir."

"No?" Swift said. "It is not often given to a man to arrive so aptly. Show him in, Robert, show him in. You should know the Squire," he said to Thistle as Robert went out. "In fact, now I think of it he is the very man to save you time and trouble."

Kilpatrick entered, and performed his rustic bow, nod and scrape. Before he could speak: "Squire, squire," Swift greeted him, "you have never been more welcome. This, this gentleman—you are a justice of the peace, are you not?"

"I am surely," the Squire said, slowly. He rubbed his nose with the handle of the whip he carried. "But what——?"

"This gentleman was wanting your acquaintance," Swift said. "Or so I believe."

The squire nodded to Thistle. He was a little at a loss, but good-humoured. "Servant, sir," he said.

Thistle said nothing. The whites of his eyes showed; he glared about him like a trapped fox.

"Come now," Swift said. "Show the squire the pistol you were about to show me. He carries it in the course of business," he added explanatorily, to Kilpatrick. The situation was too much for the squire: his expression was wholly bewildered. He rubbed his nose again with the whip handle, and looked from one to the other. Thistle made a sudden startling movement.

"Stand back," he said. The pistol was in his hand. "Stand back now. I'll not be baited by a couple of yokels. Let me pass." The blunt ugly barrel wavered between them. "No tricks now," he said dangerously.

The lash of the whip in the squire's hand uncurled serpent-like with a sharp crack. The pistol fell to the floor. Rebecca gave a little scream, and Swift said, "Good Gad." The squire's complexion deepened to purple. "Sorry," he muttered. "Startle the ladies. Thought I'd better." He rubbed his nose with the whip handle, bashfully. "Don't do it," he added sharply, as Thistle moved again. He put his foot on the pistol, shaking the whip in gentle reproof. The man flinched.

Swift blew out a great breath. "Well," he said. "I see I can leave him to you. He is yours, sir."

"What's he done?" the young man asked. "Tried to rob you, eh?"

"Not me alone," the Dean said. "You and me and all Ireland. I'll not mislead you. He would seem to be within the law. He is agent for one Wood, who belies his name by dealing in brass. He, and no doubt others like him, are to flood the country, by licence, with spurious halfpence, taking our good silver in return—if we are fools enough to let 'em. And what will be the end, when we have no coin left but this filthy trash? A halfpenny is a little thing, but when it comes to forty of them for a pint of ale, what then? Why, you have but to begin to think of it—think of the mere weight upon our shoulders. See, I have one here. What does it weigh?—a fifth of an ounce? Suppose it for a moment. Five to the ounce—then eighty weigh a pound, and consequently"—he calculated mentally—"yes, twenty shillings is six pounds butter weight. Say a tenant brings you one hundred pounds for his rent—that is six hundred pounds weight—three horses' load. Go further——"

"No further, in God's name," the squire said hastily. "Enough is enough." He passed a hand over his brow. "Too much for me."

"And for me," Thistle said impudently, taking courage. "Put up that whip. You heard him say I was within the law. I have done no crime. I'll be on my way."

"Quiet, you dog," Swift said.

"Aye, quiet," the squire said, and finished absently, "you dog." Light seemed to break upon him; his face glowed; for a moment he looked oddly like a small boy intent on mischief. "Damme, yes," he said as if to himself; and then, to Thistle: "Outside now. Stir yourself." Ignoring Swift, who made as if to speak, he ushered the man out, prodding him with the whip. There was an interval of silence, followed by a confused shouting, a yelping of hounds, and then the squire: "Sick him, Lion; at him, Flora." He ended with a ringing view-halloa; the dog's voices diminished rapidly into the distance; in a moment more he came back into the room, a little sheepishly.

"He's gone," he said. He seemed to expect reproof. "No more trouble from Mr. Thistle." His face crumpled strangely,

eyes closed and mouth open, no sound issuing; he was laughing. "Ran like a stag," he said, when he had recovered, "you should have seen him. Your credit, too—when you called him dog, it came to me." He laughed again.

"But, Mr. Kilpatrick," Stella said, laughing with him, "suppose he lodges a complaint. After all, as the Dean said, there was no felony in what he did."

Kilpatrick shook his head vigorously. "No fear of that," he said. "They all know me. My friends. My word against his." He swallowed hard, realizing to whom he was speaking, and added lamely: "Ma'am."

"And what of his animal?" Swift said. "He has a pack-horse standing in our yard, complete with two kegs of his merchandise."

The squire rubbed his nose. "The bog," he said at last. "If it ran loose in the bog, and took a tumble or two, who'd be to blame? It might lose its pack in a pool."

"You have a happy invention," Swift said. He rose. "I will tell Robert——"

"Leave it to me," the squire said. "Best. Not a justice for nothing." He stood up too. "See to it now," he mumbled. "If you'll excuse me." He nodded once or twice. "Call again, if I may." He backed out, leaving Swift and Stella to look at each other, speechless.

He was uneasy, after that. He busied himself with the same pursuits, but not with the same zest; his heart was not in them. Stella knew it well enough, she knew him too well to overlook the change in him. She said nothing, but waited for him to speak. A letter from Sheridan crystallized doubt into decision.

He came to her with it open in his hand. "There," he said, and dropped it on her knee. "You see. He has bungled it. I knew it. I knew it before ever he went." He moved restlessly about the room while she read the letter; standing to look through the window; picking up a book, opening it, and laying it down; tapping on the table top: never still for a moment.

She looked up at last. "But——" she began, and he turned on her.

"Aye," he said, "but. But and but and but. Yet there it is. I know"—he stopped her with raised hand—"all the

explanations, all the good reasons. Of course it is against all sense that any should think he would choose this time, this time of all others when he has but just received preferment, to discover disloyalty in the pulpit. I would even swear that none truly think it. But if he, in his position, has so little advertence that he can choose a thanksgiving for the King's accession for a sermon on that text, then there is none but himself to blame. 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof!' Good Gad! Can you imagine it? And in the city of Cork itself."

"But surely," Stella said. "For a mere slip, and in one so young and inexperienced, with not an enemy in the world——"

He shook his head from side to side. "No, no," he said. "You are as bad as he. Have you known me all these years, and still do not realize that it is safer for a man's interest to blaspheme God than to be of the party out of power? Or even to be thought so? Not an enemy in the world, you say—there is hardly a Whig in Ireland who would allow a potato and buttermilk to a reputed Tory, be his name Sheridan or Patrick Murphy—and without his being a known friend of Doctor Swift's besides. You are speaking without reflection."

She sighed. "You are right," she said. "As always. He is my friend—that was all I saw. And so—what shall you do?"

"Why——" he hesitated. "I must get back to Dublin. There is nothing else for it. And there is a double reason."

"I know the other," she told him, with a faint smile. "The halfpence. I have been waiting for you to speak of it."

He looked at her for a moment. "I should have expected it," he said. "You always read my mind. But—I was loath to bring it up. When—you remember when we first spoke of it—when you told me——"

"Jonathan, my dear," she said. "How little, after all, you know of me. I was ill, and you had hurt me——"

"Then——" he said; he spoke eagerly, the words rushed out. "Then you do realize what an opportunity—it will never come again. Here is a cause I might have dreamed of. Schulemberg, the king's German whore, and this mechanic, Wood, and Walpole himself no doubt, all mixed up in a vile stinking job against the whole people of the kingdom of Ireland—the whole people, mark you, from the arrantest booby that ever went to Court, to the lowest beggar in the liberties. And I am

the man that can bring them together, make their will one will, free them from this stupid Whig tyranny, avenge myself—and Sheridan too——” He stopped and put a hand to his ear.

“What is it?” she asked.

“Nothing,” he said, more soberly. “Nothing. A little stab, no more. That is what comes of thinking myself a boy again. It was nothing.” He took a deep breath. “I must get back to Dublin. Sheridan will need my help, and this other business cannot be done from here. The question is, what will you do? Stay? Or come back with me?”

“Can you ask?” she said. “I shall come back. There is no question about it. I am in better health than I have been for years. You know that. And in any case: winter at Quilca? Oh, no. What would Rebecca say?” She laughed. “We shall come back with you.”

“There—there is another answer I want from you,” he said, in a low tone. “I have not pressed you. I have given you time to think.”

“You have been very forbearing,” she said. “I have—thought of the matter a great deal.”

“And the answer?” he asked.

“I have wondered a great deal too,” she said. “Why you should ask me now, chiefly. We have gone on so long without it——”

“I told you my reasons,” he said.

“I know what you told me,” she pursued her thought. “And yet—you say I read your mind. Do I? Not in this. In this I cannot even read my own. So long, Jonathan—that now I am not even sure I want to change. I have not grown younger all this time, I am often ailing, I do not know if I have the strength to manage your house. I am sure I have no more taste than you for fleshly joys—have you ever thought, Jonathan, how fortunate you were to find a cold woman for your friend?” She smiled rather bitterly. “I have never called myself that before. It is true now, but was it always? Or was it your mind that chilled me, with its reason and its reasons?” She paused. “No, do not tell me I can read it. I cannot.”

“There is nothing to read but what you know,” he said. The words sounded uneasily in his ears; even his voice was like a stranger’s. He went on, trying to modulate it normally: “You

have been very open with me. It is what I expected from you. I cannot answer your questions. All I know is that I have always tried to do what I thought right. I will not say it was: I thought it so. No one could ever take your place in my—heart. No one ever has. If you are thinking of—Vanessa: she is nothing. Forget her.” He heard the words echoing in his mind: nothing, forget her, nothing, forget her—like a tolling bell. He stood up sharply. “Give me your answer.”

“I will do as you wish,” she said, very low.

“It is not enough,” he said, “what I wish. What do you wish?”

“You have decided so far,” she said, so that he could scarcely hear. “You must decide now.”

He made an impatient sound. “I wish you to marry me,” he said. “But it is absurd that I should be put in the position of forcing you.”

She said nothing.

“Very well,” he said at last. “If that is how you will have it. You will marry me. But I am going back to a dangerous business. You have seen what has happened to Sheridan, for a mere stupidity. Worse may come to me. I will not have you concerned in it. We shall marry, but until this thing is done with, one way or the other, it shall be kept private. Thus, you may be left safe if harm should come to me, and it will not touch you. And in the end you shall decide whether—you will acknowledge me.”

Her silence was completely submissive. He was to have his way. But now the prospect brought him neither pleasure nor ease of mind. It was all spoilt.

Chapter Twelve

This mood persisted all the way to Dublin. Nothing he could do would shake it off. His decision to marry had after all changed nothing; he was returning as he went. He had thought at one stroke to resolve the problem of Vanessa;

to give Stella protection, to satisfy her doubts, and at the same time to justify himself. Now he knew that even justification was not enough, until the need for it was named. No bench of judges would award punishment on a general confession: the crime itself must be particularized, witnesses heard and evidence taken. He was his own judge and his own prisoner; and he could not pronounce sentence upon himself merely for a sense of sin. His mind did not even admit its validity.

He questioned himself again and again, wearily. Stella? He had offered her friendship, which she had accepted. She had been happy. He had never misled her, nor put her under any constraint. As a young girl she had had suitors. He had placed no obstacles in their way: Tisdall, for instance, had been the most persistent. Even Tisdall had been borne civilly. But after all, Stella had five senses—the man stank abominably, his feet were dirty and his teeth rotten. She had needed no help there in saying no. Yet now——

Justification?

Questions, questions. Vanessa? He had offered Vanessa friendship too. She had not been content. Her ambitions ran beyond friendship. He had blamed himself for that, for letting her get so far unchecked. He had blamed himself, bitterly—and gone again to see her. He had never been prepared to take the one step needed to set all to rights. Even now, riding to tell her of his coming marriage, his thoughts were all of Stella. The gnawing sense of wrong done, the overpowering pressure of conscience, impulse to confession, penance, absolute abasement—were all for Stella, where no blame lay.

He was returning as he went. The same darkness, the same intangible barriers surrounded him still. The same questions awaited the same answer. Again he almost glimpsed it; a shiver passed through his body, although the air was warm, and seemed to penetrate his soul.

* * * * *

Sheridan, back in Dublin three days earlier, had little cause at first to attribute the Dean's return to friendship for himself. Black looks were his portion, and a flood of questions in the manner of an inquisitor.

“Have you seen my lord? Who forbade you to preach?”

Are you no longer chaplain? Do you never go to the Castle? Who is your accuser?"

His answers were melancholy, delivered offhand; he was ruined, he implied, there was no point in wasting breath over so wretched a creature. He would publish the offending sermon—his innocence was sufficient vindication—and retire to Quilca, and there live out his life in obscurity.

He found himself seated, and the Dean standing over him, the Dean's finger wagging in his face. "Now listen to me," he was told. "I will hear none of your visions: you shall live at Quilca but ten weeks in the year; perhaps not so much. You think all the world has now nothing to do but to pull Mr. Sheridan down; whereas it is nothing but a slap in your turn, and away. You shall sit down and be quiet, and mind your business as you should do, and contract your friendships, and expect no more from man than such an animal is capable of. You shall take care of your health, and go early to bed, and not read late at night; laugh with all men, without trusting any; and then a fig for the contrivers of your ruin. They have no further thoughts now but to stop your progress, and perhaps they may not compass that unless I am deceived more than usual. Do you hear?"

The unhappy young man nodded. "I hear," he said. "But I assure you, sir, I am not worth your trouble. I am done for, and——"

"You are a fool," the Dean said fiercely. "Silence, sirrah. You will do as I say, and say what I bid you, and endeavour to act like a man of the world. I asked you your accuser. Do you know him?"

"It is Richard Tighe," Sheridan said tiredly.

"You are sure?"

"Sure," he said. "He rode post to Dublin to pour his story into my lord's ear. Why, God knows—I never did him harm."

"He is a Whig, is he not?" Swift asked. "That is sufficient. As for you"—he shook his head—"the two devils of inadvertency and forgetfulness have got fast hold on you. When, when will you learn the nature of man? But enough of that. We shall deal with Tighe first, and my lord after. All animals fight with the weapons natural to them—devil take that animal who will not offend his enemy when he is provoked with his proper

weapon. I hope you will do so, too, to the beast who has kicked against you, and try how far his insensibility will protect him. You shall have help, and he shall be vexed, for God helping me I will kill that flea or louse which bites me, though I get no honour by it."

He put his hand on the young man's shoulder and shook him gently. "Now, away and think of what I have said. You have reason to complain, but none at all to wonder, for, as Don Quixote said to Sancho, 'What business had you to speak of a halter in a family where one of it was hanged?'"

Sheridan laughed, in spite of himself. "That is better," the Dean said. "Laugh first—and everything else will follow."

And now there were two things more to do: to write to St. John Ashe, and to see Vanessa. He wrote:

"My Lord,—If friendship has one disadvantage more than another, it is that it is apt to lay a man open from time to time to claims upon his kindness, which, in proportion as he is a man of this world, he will do his utmost to avoid; lest by too frequent demands upon them, his stocks of that precious and rare commodity run dry. Your friendship for me has met so many demands, from those of a young dull scholar for knowledge, to those of a beaten and disappointed man for mere peace of mind—and over so many years, that I must confess myself now quite without shame in presenting a further draft upon it. It is your own fault; if you were to refuse me, you should have done it long ago; it is too late now; and how well or ill this reflects upon your reputation for worldly wisdom you must judge for yourself.

"It is my own reputation for which I am concerned, as a man must be who has so few rags of it left to pull about him; I do not mean my reputation with the world, for which I am almost past caring, but with you. I know that in spite of everything you still credit me with certain principles, and a certain consistency; and as I am about to sacrifice these too in your sight, I am selfish enough to claim the last and most exacting indulgence of all: that you will hear my reasons.

"All this is but a preamble to a matter sufficiently simple: I have proposed marriage to Mrs. Esther Johnson. I have no need to commend her to you, who know her so well; the truest,

most virtuous, and valuable friend, that I, or perhaps any other, was ever blessed with. Nor would I have you think I insult her by affecting to look for reasons, when her own person, and her own wit, are reasons sufficient for any man. It is for myself I offer reasons, that have been all my life of a cold rough humour but little suited for domestic joys; I am so still; nor, though the years gather, am I yet dotard enough to think I can get warmth for my shrunken limbs from female flesh, providing it is young and tender. My reasons are more matter-of-fact and everyday: I grow old, so that death, which once seemed far off, is now something nearer; I must think of it now as likely soon or late to affect me as well as my neighbour; and I must as we say make provision—by which we mean, that as in life we are important to ourselves, so we cannot let it go without making sure of our importance to others—at any rate until the will is read.

“ In short, I desire to leave Mrs. Johnson comfortable, and at the same time to do so without giving rise to slanders that I might not be there to answer. But in case this should put you under any apprehensions for me: do not believe I am ill. I am as well as I have ever been; my deafness comes and goes, but the pains have not visited me for months, nor have I been absolutely giddy above a minute. I am so far from being ill, that I am proposing very soon to enter upon a course that makes it wholly undesirable for any lady’s name to be in any close manner linked with mine—and this is perhaps the crux of the matter, that brings me once again a suppliant for your kindness. I wish to marry, and yet I do not wish it known. I have given you reasons for the first, I cannot give you reasons for the second, without involving you in something you are better ignorant of. I am very conscious of the impudence of my request: which is, that you will do me the great honour of joining me to my friend, keep it a secret, and yet ask no questions. It is a thing I could ask from no one but the man who tutored me as a boy, and has since looked upon my every divagation with the indulgence of a father. I told you before it is your own fault; there is no more I can say, except to beg you to care for your own health, and not to wear yourself out in doing good. This is a hard injunction for you to follow, but one which you should by no means ignore, when your continuance in this life

is in itself a kindness not only to the public in general, but in particular, my lord, to your lordship's most dutiful and obedient servant, who humbly begs your blessing,

JONATHAN SWIFT."

He sealed the letter, and addressed it: To the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Clogher. By hand.

He could put it off no longer; there was no possible excuse for more delay. This was the sum of years of procrastination, this visit to Vanessa, to pull down about her ears the whole poor house of dreams she had erected over so long a time. There had never been the least chance of its conversion into reality, and yet he had permitted her to build and go on building, to add room after room, story upon story. He had protested in words, he had disclaimed responsibility; yet knowing well that words and disclaimers could have no influence upon her passion, he had continued to countenance and even to feed it by visits, by letters, and by every conceivable means apart from those same words.

Because he could not bear to hurt her. Yet he had hurt her often, unloosed upon her the flood of his brutality, lashed her with sarcasm, flayed her with contempt—and gone away to come again. The only kindness would have been to break cleanly; instead he had repeated, with sickening complacency, that he could not bear to hurt her; that the dark imperious passionate woman flinging herself at his feet with such complete abandon was, after all, the same pretty child, the same sweet bud, whose opening he had tended. As if that were enough; as if the bud had flowered specially for him, and so was his to do with as he pleased.

His own conduct sickened him. He could not understand it; it was not like him. He had always before met difficulty more than half-way. Here it was as if he did not wish to meet it; as if for all his protestations the situation was not unpleasing to him; as if where Vanessa was concerned, behind the easy self-blame, behind the fatherly solicitude and under the hypocritical denial of responsibility—the infliction of pain was actually pleasurable.

The thought struck him like a lightning flash, splitting open a livid sky. Involuntarily he set spurs to his horse. The violence

of its response, the rush of the air by his ears, could not outrun the leaping turbulence of his mind. He spurred again, deliberately. He came to a hamlet, a huddle of poor thatched cabins, and passed through it like a destroying wind, leaving a woman screaming curses behind him; why, he neither knew nor cared. If he had run her down he would not have stopped; his impulse was to fly, to escape, if he could, before the oncoming storm: before a second flash of insight could lay bare his whole soul, and exhibit him naked to himself.

He came to Kildrought all the sooner. He was not expected; Vanessa was in the garden. He was taken to her, where she sat in the little arbour she called her bower. She rose to meet him, and looked at him curiously.

"Jonathan," she said. "This is unlooked for. And you—are you unwell?"

Her tone took him by surprise. Her composure, at the end of his mad ride, was the last thing he had thought to find. He felt foolish, and took refuge in curtness.

"Unwell?" he said. "Must I be unwell to visit you?"

"You have a wild air about you," she said indifferently. "But I am glad you have come. If you had not, I should have come to you to-morrow. I had made up my mind."

"Indeed?" he said heavily. He sat down. "And yet I have told you——"

"Much," she interrupted him. "But nothing yet that I wished to hear. I have been thinking, Jonathan, a great deal, and I have come to a decision."

He stared at her.

"Yes, yes," she said impatiently, "I know your looks. But this time you shall not stare me down. You have done that too often. This time I am going to speak, and you shall listen."

She came to stand before him. "Look at me, Jonathan," she said. "I am a woman, and I love you. I love you so much that I can be what you will. If it is your desire, I can shrink, I can blush, I can be a very violet for modesty. Or, if it is necessary, I can fight; I can scratch and bite and tear. I can kill. I can be your wife, and keep your Deanery; or I will be your mistress, if that is what you wish, and offer you all the pleasures of the bagnio. Because I love you."

She was magnificent and unashamed. Her cheeks were

flushed, her eyes sparkled, her whole body seemed to vibrate with the force of her passion.

"But," she went on, before he could speak, "there is one thing I will not permit. You shall not trifle with me. I told you when I came to Ireland that I was determined. I tell you again, there is nothing I will not do to get my way. I am not prepared to be pitied for ever. We have had our game, but now that is over. We will start the next chapter." She paused for breath, her bosom heaving.

"Game?" he said. "Chapter? What is all this? Are you mad?" His voice was uncertain; her vehemence, in the midst of his own confusion, struck him like a blow, and left him shaken.

"Maybe," she said. "If I am it makes no matter. I have come to the end of pretending, Jonathan."

"I do not understand you," he said. "I——"

"And I do not believe you," she told him bluntly. "You are not so stupid. You understand me very well. I love you, and you love me——"

"No," he said. "I have told you a thousand times——"

"—though you will not admit it," she proceeded as if he had said nothing.

"I say no," he repeated. His voice rose nearly to a shout.

"Then why do you come here?" she asked, with a kind of triumph. "There is only one reason, and you know it. There can only be one answer."

He took a deep breath. "I will tell you why I have come to-day," he said slowly. "I have hesitated—to hurt you——"

"You love to hurt me," she said, "and I love it when you do." She considered him, almost contemptuously. "I wonder why," she said. "You are a poor kind of creature after all, Jonathan—a coward, I think; afraid to be a man, with a man's passions, for fear they should sweep you away, and you should forget yourself, and your precious dignity, and your pride in the great Doctor Swift. Why do I love you? I don't know."

He stood up. "That is enough," he said. "Now you are raving. I will listen no more. You will not see me again." An inward trembling possessed him; he controlled it with an effort that left him white about the lips.

"The truth is not comfortable, is it?" she said. "So you

think to turn your back on it. You will go back to your other woman, poor thing——”

He made an abrupt movement, but she hurried on.

“You have had her so long, she must have you now at any price at all.” She shrugged her shoulders. “Well, I can understand that too. But you shall not reduce me to that, Jonathan. Never. I swear it.”

He looked at her, standing for a long time motionless. He was like stone, now, the trembling was gone. His eyes were cold. She faced him with her head thrown back, proudly; proudly at first, but gradually the colour began to leave her face. At last he said, very low:

“Have you done?” She put out a hand as if to stop him. He went on: “There is no more you can say. You have presumed on the—the tenderness”—he brought out the words retchingly, with a grating sound—“you have presumed on the little tenderness I had for you, to say more than any person living has ever dared to say to me before. You have been pleased to condemn me—I accept that; maybe you have the right. But when—when you smear your filth——” His face worked, his mouth twisted suddenly, as if in response to an internal spasm. He spat on the ground, and turned.

He began to walk down the path between the bushes, now dimmed and brown at summer's end. She cried out behind him: “Jonathan.” He walked on. She called piercingly: “Jonathan. Do you really wish to kill me?” He heard her begin to follow him, and increased his pace. She called once more, “Jonathan,” as though she were choking.

He walked through the house, took his hat, mounted and rode away. His mind was empty, he thought of nothing. There was a curious feeling in his breast, as if the blood were trickling from his heart drop by drop; as if life itself were seeping from an inner unsuspected wound.

Chapter Thirteen

He awaited the reply to his letter in a fury of impatience, permitting himself to believe—forcing himself to believe that marriage would bring with it peace of mind; that once the vows were taken the image of Vanessa would vaporize and disperse like mist in the sun. He questioned himself no longer, because he no longer wished for the answer. His anxiety now was to evade the answer. And meanwhile she stood by his shoulder: he had only to turn to see her plain. He had only to close his eyes and she was before him, warm and breathing; he could see her bosom rise and fall, her eyes bright with desire, her lips moving. He could have heard her voice, but he shut his ears and barred his mind; he would not listen.

He awaited the reply to his letter. It came at last; it was gentle and kind, and yet had a certain sly perspicacity, characteristic of its writer. "Yours is a wayward spirit," the Bishop wrote, "it must find its own path, not always of the smoothest. I long since gave over trying to direct it—but if God were answering my prayers for your soul's health, my dear son, He could grant nothing to give me greater joy than I find in acceding to your present request. As for consistency, I am not even sure it is to be desired so long as men continue what they are: who among us is so little fallible, that he can ever be certain that consistency is any more than a continuance in error? I find your reasons well enough, by themselves, though I doubt not you could put others beside them if you chose. Secrecy is your own concern; I have no interest in publishing your affairs to the world, nor do I need to tell you that a secret from the world is no secret from God who sees into our hearts. I shall ask you no questions.

"You do not mention where you would have the ceremony performed, but it so happens that I have been planning these

weeks past, to descend upon poor Dilly at Finglas. (I have not seen him for an unconscionable time, and it is time I did, for his grey hairs do not excuse him from being my younger brother, nor me from my responsibility as head of the family, to drink his claret now and then.) It occurs to me that Finglas would be very convenient to you, or even more to your lady. It is near, and it is quiet; and if, as I doubt cannot be helped, a fourth party must be privy to your design, who better than that same brother of mine, who has also known you too long to be surprised at anything you do, and has ever been too feather-pated to recollect it the next day? However, if it does not suit you, send me word what you propose; otherwise I will see you and Mrs. Johnson, to whom please give my sincere service, in a little more than a week's time. Meanwhile, I pray for her and you both, and recommend your union to God's favour.

ST. JOHN CLOGHER."

Looking back, the wedding always had the flavour of a half-remembered dream; a dream's toppling queasy dignity; its odd lack of consequence: poised, it seemed, uneasily over laughter, as though a momentary break in the restraint of any of the players would have let laughter through to sweep the whole scene from the stage on a tidal wave of bitter gasping hilarity. Little things would stand out, away from any context, linking themselves with the present; so that a fire of leaves in autumn, or moonlight on water, or the tapping of heels on a tiled floor, would present him suddenly with an aching memory of familiarity as if he said, that breaks my dream—and then casting about said, no, that was no dream—it was: and more would come back to him: the bishop's gentle voice, Dillon Ashe with his lantern, nodding in the background, the moonlight falling between the pillars of the little summerhouse, the eddy reflection of the stream, and Stella's hand in his, as cold as stone. Little things, but never the whole story; little things strung like beads on a thread of fever, as though memory made a choice of what it would hold, accepting or rejecting by some capricious logic of its own.

Even at the time it was like a dream; every circumstance combined to make it so. His own state of mind, unnaturally strained: Stella's unresponsiveness; the delicacy of the two

brothers, anxious only not to intrude upon his privacy, resulting in a queer cool detachment, as though they too were moving in a parallel dream of their own. They gave him wine when he arrived, alone, and stood away from him while he drank, for fear they should seem to jostle him, even mentally. They answered his questions briefly, dropping the answers before the questions were complete, in half whispers, like feathers on the surface of a still pool. Yes, Stella was there; she had arrived an hour before, quite safe; she was upstairs with the house-keeper. He gathered that she too was alone; Rebecca had not come, then—he never knew what Stella had told her, but that in itself set a seal on the strangeness of the occasion.

At supper, the conversation lagged miserably. Dillon Ashe was by way of being a wit; he had a ready tongue and a flowing fancy, but to-night the consciousness of solemnity lay heavy on him, and he hardly spoke. The four of them sat glumly round the table; the candle flames swayed and flickered and cast sliding shadows; the cool air from the garden, coming through the open windows, played with the flames and drew a tiny jangle of sound from the lustres. Swift, opposite Stella, could see her forehead and the shadowed sockets of her eyes; she kept her head bent, and toyed with the food on her plate; only once he caught her eyes upon him; they seemed black in that light, and expressionless. He could not tell what her thoughts were.

The bishop began to speak. He had discussed the matter with Dilly, he said, and they had concluded that lights in the church would merely invite talk among the villagers. There was, besides, the verger, who lived by the church, and who would necessarily have to be drawn into the matter. God's holy sacraments, he observed, needed no temple for their celebration, beyond the pure hearts of the celebrants. He therefore suggested that he should read the service in the summerhouse in the garden, the weather being warm and the moon almost at the full. Stella rose; the three men stood up too; she must fetch her shawl, she murmured. Swift found himself walking across the lawn, the bishop's hand upon his arm.

The grass felt crisp under their feet. It was silver-bright with dew; behind them their passage left a trail of heavy black that to-morrow's sun would erase along with the night. They came to the summerhouse, circular in shape, Palladian in design, like

a pagan shrine. Its pillars in the moonlight shone white as ivory, filigreed with the shadows of leaves moving slightly as the air stirred, investing their severe grace with a shimmering unreality. Its floor was of tiles—raised two steps height above the ground; the shadows of the pillars fell softly across the tiles; the domed roof was like a pool of water inverted. It trembled; faint shapes of light ran about it like quicksilver, reflected from the surface of the little river stealing by. The voice of the water, like that of a man communing with himself, was never silent; within its monotone it rose and fell, forming sentences and periods tantalizing in their incomprehensibility. The bishop said quietly: "Shall we pray together, Jonathan?" He knelt, with the awkward movements of an old man, and clasped his hands. Swift looked down at him for a moment without understanding, locked in his dream, then knelt too. There was no prayer in his mind; it was filled with the emptiness of moonlight; he felt the tiles cold under his knees; and heard the old man's voice against the stream's whispered confidences, as though he and the water were muttering together in a foreign tongue. Words formed themselves, sounds that took shape and gathered meaning so diffidently that at first he hardly knew whether they came from without or whether his own brain conceived them. "Almighty and everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear than we are to pray, and art wont to give more than either we desire, or deserve; Pour down upon us the abundance of Thy mercy; forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask——" Words coming as it were from nowhere and planting themselves in his mind, at first words only, and then, following them at a distance, the sense——

The sense. He lifted his head with a sharp movement of enquiry. The bishop's small figure was huddled in contemplation, as if having loosed his prayer he waited for its answer. What put him upon that? Of all the prayers he might have used, he chose this, this dagger plunging straight for the heart—why? Why? He thought for a moment he had shouted the question aloud; it rang in his ears with an outraged sound; the moonlight heaved and broke into a red flower like flame. His eyes dazzled, and his mind swung away from the hard earth; the curtain of the stars parted and his mind fled between,

whether towards truth or away from it there was no knowing: it was the same thing. Because truth was, finally, inescapable; it was all about, all enveloping: be blind, and it took a voice; be deaf, and it clothed itself in fire. He cowered on his knees before it——

— and felt at last the bishop's hand upon his shoulder, shaking him, and heard his voice: "Jonathan, stand up. They are here."

He got to his feet and stood swaying. The old man looked at him kindly; and patted him on the arm. Stella, with Dillon Ashe carrying a lantern, came into the summerhouse; her heels tapped on the two steps and on the tiled floor, the only sound in all nature that was not fluid and formless. The tapping seemed to go on long after she had stopped; she stood beside him, but he could still hear her light step, tap, tap, tapping, as though she were walking eternally towards him across a stony plain. He did not look at her, nor she at him. They stood in silence, with bowed heads, waiting.

Dillon Ashe raised his lamp; its light was puny and grudging against the brilliance of the night. He held it shoulder high, and dutifully the bishop placed his book within its orbit, though he began without so much as a glance at it.

"Dearly beloved——"

The gentle voice joined again with the endless narrative of the stream, and the two ran on together.

The words poured over the surface of his mind like water over a stone. The present did not exist; the past and the future did not exist. He stood in the face of truth, alone and cold, and there was no Time. The sweat dried cold on his skin, but he was colder than that. His spirit stood naked, and trembled. He saw nothing with his eyes; and saw everything. He heard nothing with his ears; and heard words about him as the stone might hear the voice of the water washing over it, in its unbeating heart.

"—not to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts——"

"—for the procreation of children——"

"—to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continency might—keep themselves undefiled——"

His breath caught in his throat; suddenly he found himself struggling with laughter, bitter, painful laughter without humour and without humanity, that would have burst out of him shouting. For the procreation of children—children like himself, to live and grow and become men; men, not brute beasts, men with carnal lusts, appetites, but also with the power of reason; cool, lovely reason to discern the lusts and stifle the appetites; to point the way and lead the feet, to——

The bishop's voice said softly and insistently: "Jonathan. My son. You must say—'I will.' Say 'I will,' my son."

He said, obediently: "I will——"

—and in his mind continued without pausing: to teach a man to say, I will, I will this; I will that; I will lift myself above the beasts, I will be continent, I will use reason and forswear lust, I will keep myself undefiled——

—I will lie and lie and lie. I will lie from birth to dissolution, I will live, breathe and eat lies, I will lie to those that love me and lie to those that hate me, lie to myself, to God—and in the end I will lie myself into marriage, to avoid fornication——

—because that is what I have desired.

It is of that my conscience was afraid.

"Who giveth this Woman to be married to this Man?"

Dillon Ashe lowered the lantern and came forward to stand at Stella's side. The bishop said to her: "Your right hand, my child." She gave him her hand. He turned to Swift, and took his right hand. He put the two hands together.

"Say after me——"

"I, Jonathan, take thee, Esther, to my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish——"

And in his mind he swore: that at any rate is true, that I can do. This woman has loved me all her life, kept me and comforted me, in sickness and in health, forsaking all other; while I have fed her with lies, held her at arm's length, denied her what was hers by right, because by denying her I could satisfy my own false lying pride which is itself a lie, living on lies.

How fortunate you are, she said, to find a cold woman for your friend. And then: was it your mind that chilled me?

How pitiful, how base, in the face of that question, still to have been able to wonder at his hunger for justification, still to have been too blind, too wilfully blind, to see that without her coldness he could not have warmed himself at Vanessa's fire.

Too blind? There was no need of blindness, while a man had—reason. While a man had reason to help him, he could look on filth with open eyes and call it holiness, squat in a gutter and think himself enthroned. Reason could do anything, call selfishness a sacrifice, make cruelty kind, lift cowardice into continence. With reason, a man could know lust and be unashamed; deny his body but pander to his mind with a clean conscience and an abounding pride. Because reason was compact of lies.

He said to himself: Coward. Cheat. Liar.

And swore: but that I can do, from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death us do part, and thereto I plight thee my troth.

He gripped her hand, cold in his, so that for the first time she turned her head and looked at him. He found his eyes full of tears and put up his other hand to wipe them away, like a child.

Chapter Fourteen

The answer at last—and immediately it was given his mind, stretched and aching, put it aside and would have none of it. What had been so plain in the garden, so clear and sharp under the cold moon, faded with daylight as quickly as the memory of pain. He knew his heart had been sick, as a man knows he has had a toothache: the tortured nerve exhausts itself, the agony dies, and is succeeded by a gauzy swollen numbness, an ultimate absence of feeling in itself delicious; and he is content. The nerve is still there, bare and unprotected; but he is content to let it sleep. So now the Dean stepped gingerly, and forswore thought; he saw Stella as before, and was gentle and kind in accord with his resolution, surrounding

her with attentions, asking no more than her acceptance of them. He knew vaguely that she was reserved and cool, that she was withdrawn into herself, but he was not to be tempted into speculation, attributing it to a natural diffidence that time would put an end to, glossing over it, ignoring it. He shut Vanessa absolutely from his mind, and let the days pass over his head. He rode, entertained; and finding that life could be delightfully the same, forgot that he himself was not, nor ever could be again.

He wrote a little, but nothing of any depth: light verses; lampoons on Tighe, Sheridan's accuser; Gulliver's life among the projectors of Laputa—flimsy satire based symptomatically on notes made in London years before; and letters to correspondents all over the two kingdoms, seeking news of William Wood and his halfpence. He foresaw no action, yet, but the replies he got were diverting and brightly coloured. Taken together, this fragment and that allusion had a significance that apart they lacked; they were like a door in a blank wall, needing only a key to open.

Wood, it seemed, had not confined his importations to a single shipment. All up and down the coast one keg, two kegs, ten kegs, according to the size of the port, had been brought in; it was notable that Mr. Thistle, purchasing his little share in Cork, had made his way as far north as Cavan in his efforts to avoid competition. At all events, the widespread nature of the business was sufficient to confirm the Dean in what up to now had been mere suspicion. He had smelt jobbery at the outset; but then he was looking for it, and apt to find it where there was nothing. He had disliked Thistle, his manner and his methods, and had baited him on those grounds alone, letting his fancy run riot on deficiencies in the coin which after all were entirely imaginary. The name of Madam von Schulemberg was the first solid fact: he had been too long about court not to baulk at the presence of such a lady in any matter to do with money. And now, with Thistles growing rank in every field, he knew he had been right. It was impossible that a reputable coiner should take upon himself to secure distribution of his product by such disreputable means. What he did not know, what it was essential to discover was: who else was concerned; were any great names in the plan?

He set himself to find out, without showing undue interest.

Among those who came occasionally to the Deanery, was a Mr. Medlycott, a gross hearty red man, a collector of the customs at the port of Dublin. He was flattered by being asked, though at times a little bewildered by the conversation; and had been happy to be of use, more than once, in procuring rapid clearance of some small package for the Dean. He was obscure but well-informed in his own sphere, and loved gossip like an old wife; he was fond of liquor, but gossip was his passion. It was not difficult to hold him back, one night, when all the rest were gone, and settle for a good rambling crack over the fire. Swift related to him the whole history of Squire Kilpatrick, treating the halfpence as an incidental, and telling the tale as one of an eccentric character.

The collector was entertained. "Aye," he said, "there's some queer gentry in the back districts. Good blood in 'em, but run to seed, if you take me, sir." He meditated, looking into the fire. Swift waited, watching the thoughts forming and passing in his mind. Sure enough they ran in the right direction. The big man leaned forward, and tapped him on the knee. "But the other," he said, confidentially. "Don't that strike you oddly now, Mr. Dean?"

"Thistle?" Swift said. He pursed his lips doubtfully. "No. A common gipsyish scoundrel——"

"Gallows-meat," Medlycott agreed. "'Twas not him I meant, but his merchandise. New halfpence, minted in England, brought in and sold about the country like salt herrings—aye, your Thistle's not the only one, you may believe me. There's a score or more like him with dogs at their tails this very minute—and every man Jack with a licence in his scrip." He eyed Swift solemnly, with a mysterious look. "What do you say to that, Mr. Dean?"

"What should I say?" Swift asked indifferently. "I know little of such matters. My servants tell me small change is hard to come by: it is a good thing, surely, if more is put in circulation?"

The collector took a swallow from his glass. "No, no," he said, and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "What you say is true enough, and sound sense—but this particular small change—and the way of it——" He gathered himself to

speaking with special earnestness. "There's more to it yet," he said. "This is for your own ear, Mr. Dean. You will not repeat it, I know." He glanced over his shoulder. "We are—advised—not to accept the coin, if tendered." His look was owlish. Swift stared back at him impassively.

"Not an order, mark you," the big man said. "No one says out clear, this coin is light or false, or what you will. No; it's a matter of hints, and a tap on the nose, and a nod or a wink. And where it starts I don't know. But you see where it lands me, Mr. Dean. His Majesty's collector of customs, to refuse coin minted under His Majesty's own patent—and my very bread dependent on it." His voice bespoke sympathy.

He got it. "You astonish me," Swift said. "In your position, to be ruled so. Have you no warrant for what you do?"

"Warrant, is it?" he said. "Aye, warrant enough. But whose? You'll find it hard, sir, to know how a poor man comes by a place in Ireland. The bowing and the scraping, the lifted hat, the smooth tongue—for a king's collectorship, 'tis true; but what does the king know of the likes of me? I get my warrant from lesser men, and thereafter do as they bid me, if I would keep it. As for my conscience, or my care for my country, I can put them in a cupboard out of the way." He drank again, sadly. Swift refilled his glass.

"You are English?" he asked, on a sudden impulse.

"English blood, Irish bred," Medlycott said. He laughed. "Irish bread, but English butter—and no one knows better than William Medlycott which side it's spread on."

"You would not call yourself an Irishman, then?" Swift pressed him.

"'Tis not what I would, but what I can afford," he said. "I don't need to tell you who holds the purse-strings."

"And if the purse is filled with—halfpence?" Swift said dryly.

The collector slapped his knee. "That's it," he said. "There you have it. English or Irish, I'm a good subject of King George, God bless him, and as loyal as the next man. But damme, how shall a man be loyal if he don't know what side he's on? 'Tis the most damnable confusion ever I was in, and beyond me entirely. Confusion? Hark 'e, Mr. Dean——"

he hitched his chair forward conspiratorially—"You may believe it or not, as you choose, but I've even heard Speaker Conolly's name whispered—and more: My Lord Middleton's, too." He sat back again. He looked a little scared, as though he felt he had said too much.

And well he might. To fish was one thing; to land the Speaker of the Irish Commons, and the Lord Chancellor of Ireland, out of these muddy waters, was another. It was almost absurd, and yet—Swift concealed his excitement, and remarked mildly:

"Do you say so? But how then?"

"'Tis said——" He had pushed back his wig, so that an expanse of rosy scalp shone like a lamp. "But it makes no sense," he exploded, with a kind of despair. "Why should they be against 'em?"

"Maybe they too take butter on their bread," Swift said, almost at random. As he spoke, a door—the door—opened in his mind.

"If they do," Medlycott said, "'tis on the same side as myself—and English butter too. I tell you there's no sense in it."

"English butter, but Irish bread," Swift said. He spoke automatically, his eyes far away. "Irish—bread," he repeated. It seemed hardly possible; it was incredible it should have been bungled so. But if they had, if they had been so incredibly, fantastically stupid as to fix this job, this pretty job, without the knowledge of the Privy Council in Dublin; if they had ignored and flouted the Irish gentry—then—then——

He stood up. "Medlycott, my friend," he said. "If I may advise you: do as you are bid. I found out long ago that affairs of state are beyond the comprehension of honest men like you and me, and too big for our consciences conveniently to hold. Therefore, do as you are bid, and no man can expect more of you. A last glass before you go? Come: finish the bottle."

He saw him to the door, closed it and stood some time, candle in hand, before he began, slowly, to mount the stairs. There was much to think of.

News came from London too; a phrase from this friend, a word from another. With the key in his hands, each meant more than it said. It had long been rumoured that Carteret

was to succeed Grafton as Lord Lieutenant, baselessly, it had seemed; but now the rumours took shape, and gathered reason behind them. Carteret was a man of wit and wisdom; it was not to be wondered at that sooner or later he should rebel against the purblind sordid dirtiness of Walpole's government. He was, in fact, though one of the principal secretaries of State, out of place there; and more important for Swift, he was an old friend. And now there came hints, which to the seeing eye meant intrigue; hints of quarrels; hints of strain; and again the name of Lord Chancellor Middleton cropped up. It was said in London, though as yet it had no currency in Ireland, that Grafton and Middleton were at daggers drawn; no reasons were stated, but reasons apart, if it were true much else followed. Grafton was Walpole's man; if Carteret were supposed to be intriguing against Walpole, it was natural that he should be supporting Middleton. Granting that, it was again natural and eminently characteristic of Walpole that he should seek relief in having Carteret sent to Ireland; where he would at once be out of the way, and at the same time would find himself responsible for the solution of troubles which he himself had fomented.

Tortuous reasoning, smelling of the backstairs; to Swift it was like coming home, as though he were back in times past, when Stella was a good friend, far away, to be written to; and Vanessa a child to be teased. He found pleasure and diversion in weighing these imponderables, and making plans for his intervention when the time should be ripe. He would, he decided, use Robert Blakely as amanuensis. It would serve a double purpose: both to test the clarity of his argument by the responses of a man of the people, and ensure his manuscript reaching the printer in an unknown and untraceable hand. For printer, he need look no further than Harding, now after many months freed of all embarrassment; his case had dragged on, the verdict deferred and deferred again—and finally, it being in the opinion of the authorities suitably forgotten, his grace the Lord Lieutenant had been pleased to grant a modest *noli prosequi*, thus fulfilling Swift's prophesy.

Meanwhile, Christmas came and went in a kind of quiet haze, pleasant and idle. For once he felt no need to whip himself into activity. There was activity in prospect, and that was

pleasant too; but for the moment he wrapped himself in quietude, not even writing. Instead, he turned out some old verses, among them a translation of Horace made ten or eleven years ago. He read it to the company one night before the fire. "I've often wished," it began:

"I've often wished that I had clear
For life, six hundred pounds a year,
A handsome house to lodge a friend,
A river at my garden's end,
A terrace walk and half a rood,
Of land set out to plant a wood."

He got so far and fell silent. The words recalled no special emotion; he could not even remember the circumstances in which he wrote them. At no period of his past life had they been true; he had never desired tranquillity. They had been a translation not only from a foreign tongue, but from a way of thinking equally foreign. And yet now, reading them again, they seemed sincere; his voice had lingered on the gentle cadences as if they had a particular meaning, almost as if they had expressed unconsciously something he ought to have wished for and now recognized for the first time. They evoked the image of Laracor, his little country living that he seldom saw; where he had dug a canal to take the place of a river, planted willows along its banks, installed a curate—and then left it behind him. Suppose he had stayed; suppose he had been content to settle down there as a country parson; married Stella then instead of now, never gone to London, never tasted the sweets of power—never seen Vanessa. How much pain he would have avoided—and how much of his life he would not have lived. Nearly all the pain—and nearly all the pleasure too; all the great moments, all the expectancy, all the thrill of victory. If the price of that was the knowledge of defeat and pain—whatever the price, it was still worth it. Anything else was delusion.

He looked up, to continue his reading, but he had not realized how long he had been silent; they had drawn away from him; and, not to disturb him, huddled together to talk, very low. He watched for a moment: they made a pretty group for a painter: Stella, animated as she seldom was now, eyes shining, looking

absurdly young for all the grey in her black curls; Sheridan on a footstool at her feet, gazing upward, laughing; Delaney holding back, standing to deliver the *coup de grace* to Stella's eager argument; and Rebecca Dingley with her hands flickering eternally over needlework that was never done. A pretty picture—and a complete picture: nothing lacking. The thought struck him with an odd chill: he was not there, yet the picture was complete. He felt suddenly old; he had talked of it, but never before felt it in himself. He could die; he, to himself the all-important I, could be out of the picture, and not be missed. Those that remained could still be happy—happier?—without him; might even have been happier if he had never lived at all. Was that part of the price too: the pain of others? And if so—

He shook himself, and standing, went to join them. They all turned towards him.

The next day, another letter. He came in from the street, and stood weighing it in his hand, wondering, like a child, whom it was from; rubbing his ear with his other hand, where the frost had nipped it. He took the letter with him to the fire, and opening it, turned first to the signature: John Gay. Gay: dear John Gay. It was—how many years——? He began to read, hearing again that familiar voice out of the past, with the little break in it, as though from a cold: "I think of you very often: nobody wishes you better, or longs more to see you." His friend, John Gay: no demands there, no pain, but a mutual liking, a shared warmth. It warmed him now, to the very heart, to read his name, and the cheerful friendly words that went before it. It brought back the other friends, the whole laughing circle, from whom he had cut himself off except for the merest civilities, because he could not bear to think of them as gone. What a churl he was, deserving of nothing but oblivion, unworthy of friendship. He sat down at his desk and wrote:

"Coming home after a short Christmas ramble, I found a letter upon my table, and little expected when I opened it to read your name at the bottom. The best and greatest part of my life I spent in England: there I made my friendships, and there I left my desires. I am condemned for ever to another country; what is in prudence to be done?"

"What can be the design of your letter but malice, to wake

me out of a scurvy sleep, which, however, is better than none ? I am grown older since I left you, yet that is the least of my alterations; my business, my diversions, my conversations, are all entirely changed for the worse, and so are my studies and my amusements in writing. Yet, after all, this humdrum way of life might be passable enough, if you would let me alone. I shall not be able to relish my wine, my parsons, my horses, nor my garden, for three months, until the spirit you have raised be dispossessed. I have sometimes wondered that I have not visited you——” He paused in his writing; and wondered indeed. He had written that last sentence as fluently as the rest; now, reading it again, with the ink not yet dry, it amazed him. It had run easily from his pen, and yet, as far as conscious thought was concerned, it was not true. But unconsciously ? Maybe it was the truth, and in his heart he had never ceased from longing. He sighed, and went on more slowly: “—but I have been stopped by too many reasons, besides years and laziness, and yet these are very good ones. Upon my return after half a year amongst you, there would be to me, *Desiderio nec pudor nec modus*. I was long in reconciling myself to the scene, and the business, to which fortune has condemned me, and stupidity was what I had recourse to. Besides, what a figure should I make in London, while my friends are in poverty, exile, distress, and imprisonment, and my enemies with rods of iron ? ”

What a figure. And yet—when the business of the halfpence was done, and Gulliver finished—why not ? Publish the travels in London as a kind of vindication, an earnest of continuing wit, and go over soon after to taste the comments of the only men whose praise he valued out of the whole world. He might make a pretty considerable figure after all, and in his own right. He pulled himself up, shaking his head—mad thoughts: at his age, and in his ever doubtful state of health, to plunge again into the whirlpool. He wrote on, largely at random, and finished with a suggestion, no more than fantasy, that Gay should come to live in Dublin. But the thought of London stayed with him, and recurred.

* * * * *

The airy tower of reasoning he had erected with Medlycott's hints as a vague foundation, took solid form. In January, the Commons of Ireland, squires and burgesses, passed an address to

the Crown, accusing Wood of fraud and deceit. In February they were followed by the Lords. Brick by brick the tower rose higher; the king's justices and the Privy Council, sitting in Dublin, protested; the county and the city of Dublin in turn presented their petitions. For the first time in generations Irish Whig and Irish Tory, Protestant and Catholic, were together; the hive had begun to swarm. Swift felt a glow of satisfaction; if he was still able accurately to foretell events, he was also still capable of moulding them. It was now his part, and the knowledge took him back ten years, to buttress the tower, and underpin it, with the rocky strength which alone could make it unshakeable and impregnable; to add to it, in fact, the one thing missing, on which statesmen and politicians, meeting together in lofty conclave, were so apt to forget they stood: the iron unshakeable will of the common people. He began to compose an address of his own.

The Lords and Commons could be left to deal in high terms with revenue and commerce, the justices with law; his business was with shrunken limbs and empty bellies, pockets that could be full of holes for all there was else to fill them. His address should be to the tradesmen, shopkeepers, farmers, and country people in general, voteless and voiceless, crammed together in stinking alleys, rotting in dismal cabins. Because the people of the Kevin Bail were his people, he would write first of all to them, the weavers; write as a shopkeeper, a drapier, unable to buy the cloth they could not make; and through them to the farmers, unable to grow the food they could not buy. The body politic, shivering, starving, lousy, was his to wake, to quicken with fire, to feed with a new pride.

He began, soberly, solemnly. "Brethren, friends, countrymen, and fellow subjects," he wrote. "What I intend now to say to you is, next to your duty to God and the care of your salvation, of the greatest concern to yourselves and to your children: your bread and clothing, and every common necessary of life, entirely depend upon it. Therefore I do most earnestly exhort you as men, as Christians, as parents, and as lovers of your country, to read this paper with the utmost attention, or get it read to you by others"—and with an abrupt drop in tone—"which that you may do at the less expense, I have ordered the printer to sell it at the lowest rate."

It was copied by Blakely, passed to Sheridan for correction, and from him to Harding. In ten days it was in type; by the last week in March it was on the streets. It ran about the town like a flame, fanned by the March winds; everyone had it; there was no alehouse too low, no shop too poor, to exhibit a copy for the use of its customers. Its effect, for a variety of reasons, was extraordinary: its timing was exquisite, perfect; its phraseology was each man's own thought; its pictures full of life and power. Its pill was prettily gilded; almost without muscular contraction the reader swallowed the legal argument: the king had every right to grant such a patent, though in this case he was "deceived in his grant"; deceived by false councillors, as might easily happen "when we are at such a great distance from the king's court, and have nobody there to solicit for us." This mean ordinary fellow, this hardwareman, Wood, was "an Englishman, and had great friends; and knew very well where to give money to those that could speak to others, that could speak to the king and tell a fair story." And though the king, if he knew that "such a patent would utterly ruin this kingdom, which has given such proofs of its loyalty"—and "by which England gets above a million of good money every year clear into their pockets"—would no doubt "immediately recall it, and perhaps show his displeasure to somebody or other"; meanwhile his subjects could be assured that there was no law to oblige them to accept any money, under any patent whatsoever, that was not of either gold or silver, the only lawful metals. "Therefore, my friends, stand to it one and all; refuse this filthy trash. It is no treason to rebel against Mr. Wood."

And reading this, carried on imperceptibly from one argument to the next, the king's Irish subjects were at the same time entertained by a series of pictures in which each man appeared in his own person, drawn from life, active in his own trade, in his week-day clothes: the hatter, selling a dozen hats for five shillings apiece and receiving in Wood's coin five shillings for the lot; the common soldier, swaggering and hectoring in market or alehouse, threatening to beat butcher or alewife, taking their goods by force, and throwing them the bad half-pence; the brewer refusing the coin, the farmer refusing it, the landlord refusing it; or alternatively, Squire Conolly the Speaker sending his half year's rents to town on two hundred and fifty

horses; his wife coming in a coach to "our" shops, followed by a car loaded with Mr. Wood's money. Even the very beggars—"for when I give a beggar a halfpenny, it will quench his thirst, or go a good way to fill his belly; but the twelfth part of a halfpenny will do him no more service than if I should give him three pins out of my sleeve."

Terrifying pictures; and that they were painted around a premise whose truth was, to say the least, suspect, Swift cared not one jot, for as he told Sheridan, the devil take that animal that will not offend his enemy when he is provoked with his proper weapon. The name of the Drapier was in every mouth, and Robert Blakely followed him about like a dog.

It was the first shot of the battle, and with it he seemed to waken, as he had said, from a long sleep, and look about him. He had never entered on any business of weight in his whole life without Stella's interest and support; he needed it now. Her continued reserve irked him, and yet he was shy of breaking in upon it; not so much because of her feelings as of his own. Their new relationship which was to have brought them closer, was, in fact, a barrier, and moreover the consciousness of having shown emotion still embarrassed him.

Her birthday fell on March the thirteenth, when the pamphlet had just gone to Sheridan. He wrote at one sitting the verses that were her usual present from him, making them the vehicle, in his tone of gentle raillery, not only of the expression of his regard for her, but also, diffidently, of apology and reassurance.

"All travellers at first incline
Where'er they see the fairest sign,
And if they find the chambers neat,
And like the liquor and the meat,
Will call again, and recommend,
The Angel Inn to every friend.
And though the painting grows decayed,
The house will never lose its trade:
Nay, though the treacherous tapster, Thomas,
Hangs a new Angel two doors from us,
As fine as dauber's hand can make it,
In hopes that strangers may mistake it,
We think it both a shame and sin
To quit the true old Angel Inn."

Thus, neatly, it began, and continued. He gave it to her with an offhand air, and stood away to watch her read it. This he did surreptitiously, under his brows, hoping to see her smile. Her expression did not change, however; at the end she thanked him very seriously. He was consumed with disappointment, but endeavoured to hide it, not with any great success. Then she did smile, rather sadly, at his expression.

"It is very pretty," she said.

"You like it then?" he asked.

"You are still the courtier when you please," she said.

"Never, with you," he said. And when she did not reply: "The idea of the sign came to me from my pamphlet," he told her. He had to speak of it.

She laughed a little. "I recant," she said. "That was no courtier's speech."

"I mean it," he said, vexed. "I have been full of it for days, and now 'tis gone to Harding. It is writ in the person of a Drapier, and from hanging out my own sign I got on to the other." She said nothing. "Are you not interested to hear?" he asked.

"If you wish to tell me," she said.

"You know——" he began, and then stopped. "You are tired," he said. "I will not inflict it upon you now. You shall see a copy when it comes from the press."

She said nothing, but looked into the fire. He was silent, too, in his disappointment.

In April came word that Carteret was appointed Lord Lieutenant. Almost at once the Dean was visited, at the Deanery, by no less a person than Conolly himself. It was an occasion of high ceremony; great politeness from the Speaker, especial bluntness from Swift, according to his custom when faced with any pretension to rank. If Conolly's politeness was at first touched with condescension, he was soon made to realize that of the two it was he who was privileged in the interview. The Dean was a busy man, immersed in the affairs of his Cathedral; affairs, it was implied, on a somewhat higher plane than a mere matter of cash, and particularly of coin as vulgar as halfpence. He did not deny that he had heard of Mr. Wood, nor of the anonymous drapier; indeed, he admitted that he had

reason to believe that some among the poorer of his children in the Bail were more than a little agitated over both. But what——?

Conolly, confronted with a dignified, stern and bewigged prelate, seated at his desk, still holding his pen as though to emphasize that the conversation was after all an interruption, changed his tactics with accomplished ease. He had come to offer an exile the opportunity of associating his name with the aristocracy of Ireland; nevertheless he wanted that name, and if to get it meant asking for it as a favour, as a politician and a diplomat he had no objection. As an Irish politician he could even see the humour of the situation.

"It is plain enough we are all in the same boat, Mr. Dean," he said. "Some of us may have been in it longer than yourself, but that does not make us any the less Englishmen; nor does the fact that a little strip of muddy water separates us from our King afford any warrant to treat us as savages, to be compensated for our ruin by a gift of glass beads. We have addressed the Crown, in terms that allow for no misjudgment of our feelings, and got fair words in return, no more. We had reached a deadlock with my Lord Grafton, who in any event was no more than a tool of Walpole's. Is it likely we should send over persons and papers, for the cause to be judged in London, where the first might be browbeaten into submission and the second misinterpreted to their hearts' desire? We have received all requests with the stupidity of the savages they take us for, like true natives of Ireland—though God knows we are acting in the interest of the natives too, as they seem for once to realize, if this drapier is anything to go by."

"A pestilent mob-raiser," Swift declared, harshly.

"Nay, I cannot agree," Conolly said. "An honest fellow enough—and more than likely one of your parishioners besides, Mr. Dean: your children, as you very properly call them." There was a twinkle in his eye, that Swift ignored.

"He should be soundly whipped," he said, with no unbending.

"Well, we will not quarrel over that," Conolly said. "We will whip him together—if we can find him. But to return to my purpose: my Lord Carteret is now the king's viceroy. We all know him by repute as a gentleman of parts, civilized and urbane, with a reputation for justice in his handling of affairs.

We none of us know him in person, and that is why I come to you, Mr. Dean. We need your name, and your interest, to put our case to his private ear."

Swift frowned. "I know him," he said. "I'll not deny I knew him well, years ago. But as for interest—you cannot be so ignorant of my position as to assume I have an interest with him or any other member of the present government?"

"I cannot dispute with your modesty, which does you credit," Conolly said. "But I know enough of Doctor Swift to be sure that there are few men living to-day who would not feel it an honour to receive a letter from him. Allow me to plead for your name only, then. Will you lend us that? Now, while the matter pauses for Newton's assay at the Mint."

The Dean considered. "I will write to him," he said at last. "But I warn you, sir, do not lean on it too much. It may do no good."

And Conolly departed, more polite than ever, leaving him filled with a quiet satisfaction. He wrote the same day, speaking in the name of "many of the principal persons of this kingdom; to represent—the apprehensions they are under concerning Mr. Wood's patent for coining halfpence in Ireland—the most ruinous project that ever was contrived against any nation." He enclosed a copy of the drapier's letter, "suited to the vulgar, but thought to be the work of a better hand"; and ended: "I hope your excellency will forgive an old humble servant, and one who always loved and esteemed you, for interfering in matters out of his province; which he would never have done if many of the greatest persons here had not by their importunity drawn him out of his retirement, to venture giving you a little trouble in hopes to save their country from utter destruction; for which the memory of your government will be blessed by posterity. I hope to have the honour of seeing your excellency here—and do promise not to be either a frequent visitor nor troublesome solicitor, but ever with the greatest respect remain, my lord, your excellency's most obedient and most humble servant."

But as always, at his most humble he was most proud, and least prepared to suffer any slight. A month passed; five weeks, nearly six, with no reply. His anger mounted higher each day, and consumed his mind. When a letter came from Vanessa he returned it, unopened, without a second thought.

Chapter Fifteen

A chance meeting with Conolly did nothing to soothe him. The Speaker was no less civil, his bow at parting could not have been lower, but there was a suspicion of quizzical amusement in his enquiries which was not to be borne. Immediately after him, Southwell the revenue commissioner, lately raised to the peerage, planted himself in the Dean's path, saluting him with a flourish. Swift met him eye to eye. "I'll lay you a groat, my lord," he told him coldly, "I do not know you." But even this clearance of an outstanding debt, though it helped him home, did not allay his bitterness, to which he gave full expression in another letter.

"I could have wished," he wrote in a hand of extreme legibility, "your excellency had condescended so far as to let one of your under-clerks have signified to me that a letter was received. I have been long out of the world; but have not forgotten what used to pass among those I lived with while I was in it . . . if I had not a peculiar esteem for your personal qualities I should think myself to be acting a very inferior part in making this complaint." And: "I know not how your conceptions of yourself may alter by every new high station; but mine must continue the same or alter for the worse. I often told a great Minister, whom you well know, that I valued him for being the same man through all the progress of power and place. I expected the like in your lordship, and still hope that I shall be the only person who will ever find it otherwise. I shall trouble you no more——"

The answer to this could not be convicted of delay by the most rigid calculation. "To begin by confessing myself in the wrong," the viceroy declared, "will I hope be some proof that none of the stations which I have gone through have hitherto had the effects upon me which you apprehend." A few ex-

cursions into the country, he went on, might account for the interval of silence, which "has at least had this good effect, that I am convinced by the kindness of your reproaches, as well as by the goodness of your advice, that you still retain some part of your former friendship for me, of which I am the more confident from the agreeable freedom with which you express yourself."

The apology was handsome; the reproof implied in terms which the Dean himself could not have bettered. It was true the matter of Mr. Wood was dismissed as still under examination, but from the beginning he had expected no more. He replied, discovering in himself "somewhat of the bully; and that after all my rattling you have brought me down to be as humble as the most distant attender at your levee. I am ten years older than I was when I had the honour to see you last, and consequently ten times more testy. Therefore, I foretell that you, who could so easily conquer so captious a person and of so little consequence, will quickly subdue this whole kingdom to love and reverence you." A further word from Carteret, avowing himself "not altogether insensible to the force of that genius which has outshone most of this age," and subscribed "your most affectionate," set the Dean once more upon his feet. He embarked upon his second Letter in high good humour; the Drapier had at any rate one friend at court.

Harding's news-sheet, dated August the first, contained a paragraph from London relating to Wood's halfpence. It stated, briefly, that several Irish merchants, examined before a committee of council, agreed upon the utmost necessity of copper money in Ireland; that Sir Isaac Newton reported an assay taken at the Tower, by which it appeared that Wood had in all respects performed his contract; that he had already coined seventeen thousand pounds and had copper prepared to make it up to forty thousand, but would be content to coin no more unless the exigencies of trade required it; and that in view of the apprehensions prevailing, that his new coinage would drain away all the gold and silver of Ireland, he proposed to take manufactures in exchange, and no person would be obliged to receive more than fivepence halfpenny at one payment. "N.B." it concluded. "No evidence appeared, from Ireland or else-

where, to prove the mischiefs complained of, or any abuses whatsoever committed in the execution of the said grant."

The Drapier fell on this with the enthusiasm of a tiger. He was informed, he said, that Wood was generally his own news-writer. "Observe," he continued, "this little impudent hardwareman turning into ridicule the direful apprehensions of a whole kingdom, priding himself as the cause of them, and daring to prescribe (what no King of England ever attempted) how far a whole nation shall be obliged to take his coin." Obligated? Contract? Contract with whom? The parliament or people of Ireland?—were not they to be the purchasers? "But they detest, abhor, and reject it, as corrupt, fraudulent, mingled with dirt and trash." As for the assay, "I have heard of a man who had a mind to sell his house, and therefore carried a piece of brick in his pocket, which he showed as a pattern to encourage purchasers; and this is directly the case in point with Mr. Wood's assay. Let him and his crew of founders and tinkers, coin on, till there is not an old kettle left in the kingdom—let them coin old leather, tobacco pipe-clay, or dirt in the street, and call their trumpery by what name they please, from a guinea to a farthing—we are not under any concern to know how he and his tribe of accomplices think fit to employ themselves. But I hope and trust that we are all to a man fully determined to have nothing to do with him or his wares.

"Good God," he cried, "who are this wretch's advisers? He will oblige me to take fivepence halfpenny of his brass in every payment; and I will shoot Mr. Wood and his deputies through the head, like highwaymen or housebreakers, if they dare to force one farthing of their coin on me in the payment of a hundred pounds. It is no loss of honour to submit to the lion; but who with the figure of a man, can think with patience of being devoured alive by a rat?"

And so, through a series of calculations the arithmetic of which any man could check for himself—fivepence halfpenny in each payment, twenty pounds in a day, one hundred and sixty pounds a year, "wherein you will be the losers of at least one hundred and forty pounds——" to the last impudence: no evidence. A whole kingdom was kept in daily dread, "not by a powerful invader, not by a plague or a famine, not by a tyrannical prince (for we never had one more gracious) or a corrupt administra-

tion—but by one single, insignificant, diminutive mechanic.” A whole kingdom, first through its Commons, and second through the privy council, had addressed his majesty against these halfpence. “What could be done more to express the universal sense of the nation? If his copper were diamonds, and the kingdom were entirely against it, would not that be sufficient to reject it?”

Fuel to the flames, which now leapt up roaring. It began to be unpleasant for Swift to move about the streets; not, this time, because of the fear of hostility, but because of the embarrassment of popularity too freely expressed. No one was in any doubt as to the identity of the Drapier; strangers pressed forward unbidden to catch him by the sleeve, the dirty hands of the mob reached out to caress him. He professed to be unmoved by this outpouring of goodwill, likening himself to a Jew of Madrid, on his way to the stake. The urchins cry stand firm, Moses, he remarked sourly, but their only concern is for their sport, for fear his recantation should snatch it from them. Nevertheless, inwardly he was warmed and pleased; the torn fibres of his self-respect were healing.

On the eighteenth of August he received a copy of the Report of the Committee of the Lords of His Majesty’s Most Honourable Privy Council in England, relating to Mr. Wood’s halfpence: the same to which Harding’s news-letter had referred. The day following he was almost overturned into the gutter by the throng outside the principal banker’s in the city. There were all classes in it, but mostly the citizens and shopkeepers to whom so far he had addressed himself. “I can live better than many others,” his last letter had said. “I have some gold and silver by me, and a shop well-furnished; and shall be able to make a shift when many of my betters are starving.” In the present temper of the people this was a sufficient hint; many a man had looked into his strongbox and decided that for the moment his own possessions would be safer in specie and under his hand. They had gathered at the bank, and to them came others, until the clerks at the wickets were harassed and sweating, and the tail of those waiting their turn had overflowed into the street. Seeing their defender pass by, a murmur went up; he was immediately surrounded, and had to fight his way out, with Robert’s help, by the exercise of main force.

He retired to the Deanery, and thereafter, took his exercise again in the Bail, or on wet days up and down the stairs, up the front and down the back, like a man on the treadmill. He prepared his third Letter, which was on the streets on the twenty-sixth. This was phrased with somewhat more polish, and addressed: "To the Nobility and Gentry of the Kingdom of Ireland." His subject was again the Report of the Committee; he again repeated the legal arguments, but in more detail, with chapter and verse, all the time stressing that his case was based on "plain reason, unassisted by art, cunning and eloquence"; and all the time, with a simplicity so refined as to be above art, directing the resentment of his readers not against the Crown, nor against the Government, but against the one man, Wood. The ice on which he walked could not possibly be thinner; he knew well that at a given point the patience of the Ministry would give way, and their anger burst out in action. At that point the matter would be made one of treason, Jacobitism, what you will; and therefore it was Wood against whom he thundered, Wood who should be brought down.

"The addresses of the Lords and Commons of Ireland," he said, "against a ruinous destructive project of an obscure single undertaker, are called (by the Committee) 'a clamour.' I desire to know how such a style would be resented in England from a committee there to a parliament; and how many impeachments would follow upon it? Were not the people of Ireland born as free as those of England? How have they forfeited their freedom? Is not their parliament as fair a representative of the people as that of England? And has not their Privy Council as great or a greater share in the administration of public affairs? Are they not subjects of the same king? Does not the same sun shine upon them? And have they not the same God for their protector? Am I a freeman of England, and do I become a slave in six hours by crossing the Channel?"

For whose good was the patent granted? he asked. For the good of a kingdom distinguished for its loyalty above all else on earth, or for the good of Mr. Wood? If the former, then let the people of that kingdom be the judges: "We know our own wants but too well: they are many, and grievous to be borne, but quite of another kind."

And then with a sardonic grin: "I am very sensible that

such a work as I have undertaken might have worthily employed a much better pen—I was in the case of David, who could not move in the armour of Saul, and therefore I rather chose to attack this uncircumcized Philistine (Wood, I mean) with a sling and a stone. And I may say, for Wood's honour as well as my own, that he resembles Goliath in many circumstances very applicable to the present purpose; for Goliath had 'a helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass; and he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders.' In short, he was like Mr. Wood, all over brass, and he defied the armies of the living God."

This line of thought, broached in jest, he pursued further in all seriousness. In the second week of September he preached a sermon in the Cathedral. His text was from Galatians: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men." God enjoins us to love our neighbour as ourselves; not, he added characteristically, as well as ourselves, but in the same way as we love ourselves. "But besides the love we owe to every man in his particular capacity, there is yet another duty of a more extensive large nature incumbent on us: which is, our love to our neighbour in his public capacity, as he is a member of that great body the commonwealth; and this is usually called the love of the public." Every man has it in his power to be useful to the public; it was often in the power of the meanest to do great mischief; while all wilful injuries done to the public were very great and aggravated sins in the sight of God. There was, he proceeded, even at that moment, in each and every man, however humble, the power to do good by rejecting what might appear to be to his own interest, and clinging to that of his country: "for this wicked project can succeed only by our own folly."

"Perhaps," he said sternly, "it may be thought by some that this way of discoursing is not so proper from the pulpit." His eye rested a moment on the members of his chapter, sitting uneasy in their stalls; and turned again to the congregation. "But surely," he asked, throwing up his hands, "when an open attempt is made and far carried on, to make a great kingdom one large poor-house, to deprive us of all means to exercise

charity, to turn our cities and churches into ruins, to make the country a desert for wild beasts and robbers, to destroy all arts and sciences, all trades and manufactures, and the very tillage of the ground, only to enrich one obscure, ill-designing projector and his followers, it is time for the pastor to cry out 'that the wolf is getting into his flock,' to warn them to stand together, and all to consult the common safety."

It was clear that the business was approaching crisis. The Lords Justices refused to put the coin in circulation; indeed, they would have found it hard to lay hands on any man bold enough to offer a single halfpenny of it over the counter. Pamphlets, broadsides, leaflets, poured from the presses until the gutters were littered with ragged paper—some of them nothing short of treasonable, all bought up as they appeared. Wood was carried in effigy about the streets by bands of hooligans, and burnt in the public squares; no one interfered, the soberer public watched with approval. A number of Inns put up new signs, and the Drapier, looking oddly reverend for so humble a tradesman, gazed down woodenly on his devotees below.

Swift himself showed no more emotion. All his affairs went forward as usual, none was neglected. But he kept Robert up at nights, writing and rewriting, preparing his fourth letter, which was to be addressed To the Whole People of Ireland, and published immediately before Carteret's arrival. He had other letters in mind—if necessary a fifth, a sixth and a seventh; but these were not, in fact, put out until years after, and even as he considered them he knew that the day would be won or lost with the fourth.

The viceroy's coming was rumoured every hour, and so the Drapier denied that he was "to be despatched over in great haste before the ordinary time, to settle Wood's halfpence": denial being as easy a way as any other of introducing an idea into the public mind. He was determined that Carteret should be forced to action while the outcry was at its loudest; that he should be given not a moment's breathing space to practise conciliation. His wit was not to be suppressed, painting in passing a picture of the whole Irish people "as merry and sociable as beggars, only with this one abatement, that we should neither have meat to feed ourselves nor manufactures to clothe us, unless we could be content to prance about in coats

of mail or eat brass as ostriches do iron." But all in all the letter rose to a plain height of eloquence so far untouched: "They tell us," he said, "that Ireland is a depending kingdom, as if the people of Ireland are in some state of slavery or dependence different from those of England. But I declare, next under God, I depend only on the king my sovereign and on the laws of my own country. And I am so far from depending upon the people of England, that if they should ever rebel against my sovereign (which God forbid) I would be ready, at the first command from His Majesty, to take arms against them, as some of my countrymen did against theirs at Preston. And if such a rebellion should prove so successful as to fix the Pretender on the throne of England, I would venture to transgress that statute so far as to lose every drop of my blood to hinder him from being King of Ireland.

"For in reason, all government without the consent of the governed is the very definition of slavery; but, in fact, eleven men well armed will certainly subdue one single man in his shirt. But I have done; for those who have used power to cramp liberty, have gone so far as to resent even the liberty of complaining; although a man upon the rack was never known to be refused the liberty of roaring as loud as he thought fit."

He had done, and could do no more now, but wait. The fourth letter was printed, and put on sale; the next moves were Carteret's; he waited, beguiling the time with Gulliver, adding to the chapters on the projectors of Laputa, with half an eye on Wood, and Walpole, and Newton, and the other personages with whom his mind had been so engaged. It was like the pause at the centre of a storm; the winds raged all about, but in the Deanery it was quiet, and the noise of the streets came in as a distant echo, if at all. Inwardly, his nerves were drawn tight; he found himself listening for that echo, wondering what Carteret would do. He felt an almost irresistible urge to go about, to talk to the common man, to find out what he was thinking, whether passions still ran as high in the game of politics he had been playing, with halfpence for counters. Halfpence—a fine cause, a dingy battlecry to stir the heart. He came at last to doubt if he had in fact made even a ripple on the pool, whether the stone he had flung so bravely had not just

sunk without a splash, except in his own imagination. It would be bad enough if the people for whom he had fought were to betray him deliberately to imprisonment or even death; if betrayal came not from design, but from mere indifference, if he were to be quietly taken up and not a soul notice he had gone, that would be ignominy, and bitterer than death. He held himself tighter still; and waited.

Sheridan and Delaney arrived together; coming separately, meeting on the doorstep, each with the same news. The viceroy was landed, and gone straight to the Castle; and within two hours had issued a proclamation.

"And its terms?" the Dean asked. His fingers drummed on the table-top.

"Three hundred pounds," Delaney said. "Three hundred pounds for the identity of the person known as the Drapier—that and the thanks of a grateful country."

"Ah." He blew out a great breath. "Then my lord does not profess to know who is this—this person?"

"Who does?" Sheridan cried. "I'd swear there's not a man this side the water——"

"Tom, my good Tom," Swift said. "Does experience teach you nothing? Is knowledge necessary for an accusation, or justice, or anything but an honest desire to please where pleasure will bring the quickest profit?"

"All the same," Delaney supported Sheridan, "all the same, Jonathan, I am with Tom in what he says. I do not believe there is a man breathing in all Ireland that would name the Drapier, or dare to even if he would. If it comes to that, I believe his excellency is of the same opinion. In fact, the story goes that he said as much when he ordered the proclamation."

"You heard that too?" Sheridan said. "You see?" he said to Swift. "I am certain it is so, and more certain since they have taken Harding again. They must know he will not speak. They do not wish to be told."

"Harding?" Swift said. "Taken again?" He bit his lip. "By God," he burst out. "This is a piece of damnable cowardly oppression. Regarding the Drapier you may be right—but this—This time he shall not go unhelped. This time there shall be no special verdict. I will not permit it—the people shall not

permit it. We will have him out—when is the levee ? ” he asked abruptly.

“ To-morrow,” Delaney said, “ but——”

“ No buts,” Swift said. “ You are good fellows both, good friends, but this is my business. I shall see to it.”

He attended the levee the next morning, with a double purpose: to help little Harding, if he could; and to leave no doubt where he himself stood, in Carteret’s mind or his own.

He went late, by design. The great audience chamber was full: lords and commons, the fashion of Dublin, the self-seekers, the curious, ranked round a circular space. Inside the circle his excellency the lord lieutenant, tall, young, dignified and charming, moved from one to the other. The Dean elbowed his way to the front, with no ceremony, and waited.

Seeing him, Carteret smiled. “ Mr. Dean,” he said. He held out both his hands. “ You honour us.”

The Dean bowed, shortly, and straightened himself. For a moment he did not speak; his eyes sparkled, dangerously. Then: “ Soh, my lord,” he said, in a general silence. “ This is a fine beginning you have made, have you not ? ” It was his pulpit voice he used, that could fill the cathedral. “ To take up and throw into jail a poor printer, whose only crime is to ink in what every man has in his heart, in an honest endeavour to save his country from ruin ? ”

Carteret still smiled; he rested his hand on his hip, and said nothing.

“ Is this what a devoted nation must hope for from your government ? The encouragement of false swearers and the oppression of a poor tradesman, dealing in the penny productions of penniless scribblers ? Must he and his like venture their liberty and maybe their lives for the purchase of half a crown ? And on what complaint ? A design to sow sedition ?—a reflection on the king and his ministers ?—an endeavour to alienate Irish affections from the people of England ? I tell you, my lord, in common with everyone here, I have read these papers that are complained of, and I cannot find the least grounds for it. All there is, is an appeal to law, no question of His Majesty’s prerogative—the prerogative is not concerned; an appeal to liberty, and the common rights of mankind whether in England or Ireland—unless maybe you consider that what will

grow freely in the climate of one must wither in the air of the other? Is that your case, my lord—or have you no case, but only a vain ambition to see a statue of yourself in the middle of Sackville Street—a statue of copper for this service done to Wood?”

There was a moment more of silence; someone tittered at the pun. Carteret was perfectly unruffled. He glanced about him, and the murmur died down. He said softly, but clearly: “Why, Mr. Dean, you must have patience with me a little—‘my cruel fate, and doubts attending an unsettled state, force me’——” The Virgilian tag, so aptly and dexterously applied, delivered with such a gentle disarming humour, was more effective than a volley of gunfire. Swift stared at him blankly. “Good God,” he said at last, as if to himself, “what a mistake is here. They have sent us Wisdom for governor.” He bowed again, very low. “My lord,” he said. The viceroy nodded and passed on to the next suitor.

He returned home well pleased, but no less determined to have Harding freed at the earliest moment. A Grand Jury would be convened to indict him, that much was certain; and this time the members of it should not be left unguided, with nothing to oppose to Whitshed or any other corrupt judge, but a dumb refusal to perpetrate an injustice. They should be directed as to their rights, and even more.

He therefore began that same afternoon to turn over in his mind a few words of seasonable advice to the Grand Jury, to be ready for when it was called. By night he had the gist of it, and rang for Robert Blakely. It was Mrs. Brent that came. Robert was not yet come in, she said. Swift looked at her sharply.

“What o’clock is it?” he asked.

“Close on ten, sir,” she told him. As she spoke the Cathedral clock confirmed it.

“Where is he then?” he asked. “He has no errand to keep him so late, surely?”

“No, sir,” she said. “He is about his own business. But he has half an hour yet.” She referred to the rule of the house, that no servant should be out later than a half after ten.

“Very well,” he said, with a poor grace. “When he comes, send him to me.”

The chimes told the second quarter, and the Dean rang for Mrs. Brent again. "Is he here?" he asked.

"No, your reverence," she said. "Nor any sign of him."

"Then lock the door," he said. "And if he comes now, let him knock till morning. I'll have no night bird servant of mine." His tone was final; the housekeeper did not argue. The door was locked, and the Deanery slept; all but the Dean. He sat up, writing and waiting. He finished his Advice, pointing out that the Drapier had written three other pamphlets before this, universally approved; that throughout he was clearly a loyal subject of the King and devoted to the House of Hanover; that it must be considered whether any one word in the pamphlet was really liable to be found wicked, seditious, malicious, and so on, except by inadvertence; that it should be considered, what influence the finding of the jury might have upon the kingdom, and especially on those outside Dublin, who would undoubtedly conclude a favourable verdict to be in favour of Wood's coin. The jury were reminded that they themselves, "merchants and principal shopkeepers," stood to gain nothing by finding, and to lose nothing by rejecting the bill; but that a poor man perfectly innocent, the printer, might suffer a great injustice from it. For in any case it would be impossible to find the author, unless he would discover himself. God protect us and him, he wrote, and concluded with a fable, which he ascribed to Demosthenes; who, having served the people of Athens with great fidelity, and apprehending on a certain occasion to be delivered over to his enemies, told his countrymen the following story: Once upon a time the wolves desired a league with the sheep, upon this condition, that the cause of strife might be taken away, which was the shepherds and mastiffs: this being granted, the wolves, without one fear, made havoc of the sheep.

Three o'clock had gone by before he was done. He went to the window and looked out, half expecting to see Robert sitting on the steps. The street was empty. He stood shivering slightly, for the fire was dead and the room cold. If treachery had found its place in his own household, he reflected drearily, what he had just written would be of less help in preserving either Harding or himself than one of Wood's own halfpence. His head was full of a dull aching; the moonlight lapped the steps below like water; he began to remember—things he did

not permit himself to remember. He turned about and went to bed; but he might as well have stayed up for all the good he got from it.

In the morning Mrs. Brent announced that Robert was in the kitchen, asking to see him.

"I would not let him up," she said, "until I had your orders, sir. But the poor fellow——" She fell silent under his eye.

"I will see him," he said. "Now."

The man came in. A long ragged scratch glared angrily on one cheek, a rent in his breeches had been roughly stitched together. He had the look of having been all night in his clothes. He waited, wretched, just inside the door. Swift appraised him coldly.

"Well, sirrah?" he said at last.

"Your honour," the man said. He seemed at a loss for words; his tongue explored the inside of his cheek, under the scratch; he blinked red-rimmed eyes. "I—I can only ask your honour's pardon," he brought out at last. "It was—a special occasion."

"Occasion? What occasion?" Swift demanded.

"I was drinking the Drapier's health," the man said. "I—got tipsy, your honour; there was a brawl—I think I have laid in a gutter most of the night," he finished miserably, on the verge of tears. "If your honour will but pardon me this once. It shall never happen again."

"I will see it does not," Swift said. He stood up. "Drinking the Drapier's health, you say. With what? The fees of treachery, you dog? How much were you paid? Three hundred pounds?"

"Nothing, your honour," Robert said. He clasped his hands together and fell on his knees. "I swear before God—'twas friends treated me——"

"And having me in your power, you can take what liberties you please," Swift said, contemptuously. "Is that the way of it? But I will show you you are wrong. Out of my house, villain—I am done with you." He turned his back, and in the end the man went, not from the house, but to the lower hall, where he spent the day wringing his hands, weeping.

Sheridan found him there in the afternoon. "Why, Robert," he said. "What this, man? Are you in trouble?"

Robert told him the sad story. "It is not the place I mind, nor the salary," he blubbered. "I would willingly serve the Dean the rest of my life, for nothing. It is that—that he should think so low of me, as that I would betray him for any reward in the world."

"Now, now," Sheridan said. "It is not as bad as it sounds—I know it. You shall leave it with me, now. I will see the Dean, and put all right."

He mounted the stairs. His news was short: the Grand Jury was to be empanelled on the twelfth of November.

"Then you shall see each man has this in his hands on the eleventh," Swift said. "You will have to find another printer, Tom." He handed him the manuscript, and waited while he read it. "Do you think it will do?" he asked. "I had not my usual secretary to assist me."

"It is excellent," Sheridan said. "You could not better it. As for your secretary, he is below in the hall, and like to float the house away on his tears——"

"I know it," Swift said. "His moans have pierced my eardrums all the afternoon."

"He is an honest fellow," Sheridan said. "Could you not——"

"His punishment is till six o'clock," Swift said. "Then I shall reinstate him. He must learn that trust is no ground for presuming, the rogue."

The Grand Jury sat on the twelfth. They threw out the bill. Whitshed, in a towering congested fury, discharged them.

The next week, a further broadsheet appeared, and was distributed throughout Dublin free of charge. It was headed: "Resolutions of the House of Commons in England, November 13th, 1680." It ran: "Resolved, that the discharging of a grand jury by any judge, before the end of the term, assizes, or sessions, while matters are under their consideration, and not presented, is arbitrary, illegal, destructive to the public justice, a manifest violation of his oath, and is a means to subvert the fundamental laws of this kingdom."

A fortnight later, a second grand jury was convened. This not only threw out a similar bill, but drew up a presentment supporting the Drapier, in language even stronger than his own.

"As," they declared, "we do with all just gratitude, acknowledge the services of all such patriots as have been eminently zealous for the interest of His Majesty and this country, in detecting the fraudulent imposition of the said Wood, and preventing the passing of his base coin; so we do, at the same time, declare our abhorrence and detestation of all reflections on His Majesty and his government; and that we are ready, with our lives and fortunes, to defend his most sacred majesty, against the pretender, and all His Majesty's open and secret enemies both at home and abroad."

The matter was finished. It was obvious the halfpence must be withdrawn. The Drapier was a universal toast; infants were baptised with his name; his likeness was hawked about the streets. Carteret wrote home, that if he had been instructed to take the Drapier's person, he would have attempted it, with faint hope, with not less than ten thousand men, fully armed.

The day the withdrawal was certain, Swift called Robert Blakely to him, looked him up and down. "That is my livery you are wearing?" he asked shortly.

"It is, sir," the man said.

"You have clothes of your own?" he asked.

"I have indeed, sir," Robert said.

"Then strip, and put them on," he commanded.

"But, your honour——" the man stammered, helplessly.

"What have I—there is nothing——"

"Do as I bid you, fellow," he said. "And come back to me here. Quick, quick, quick."

When Robert returned, the rest of the household were gathered uneasily under the Dean's threatening gaze. He addressed them.

"You know this man," he said. "It is Robert Blakely, your friend, and my very true and faithful servant. He is now verger of St. Patrick's. You will address him henceforward as Mr. Blakely, and pay him the respect due to his position. Do not forget it, or you will answer to me." He would hear no thanks.

The next day Harding died, of a fever caught in prison.

Chapter Sixteen

He had won his victory, done what he set out to do. He had united a nation, and beaten its oppressor. The people of Ireland were free.

But Harding was dead, like Oxford, from whose son the news had come, months back, when the air was ringing with the Drapier's name. He had been too busy then, too armoured round by circumstance, to feel more than a pang of grief, quickly past. Now, in his victorious leisure, he found himself more affected by the death of the obscure printer, the little stout shining man whom he had seen but once, than by that of the man he had respected and admired beyond all others. The companion and leader of his great days had gone unnoticed, like a star falling in another hemisphere; while his lieutenant in exile, dying, left a sense of loss acute and personal. This reversal of values vexed his mind, and put it to questioning.

What was this proud victory?—the upsetting of a manikin to whom England, the fair dealer, was even now awarding twenty thousand pounds to console him for his disappointment; a petty skirmish important only to his own insignificance. The people of Ireland were free indeed—to starve in peace. But Harding, who should have been there, in his shop in St. Francis Street, to ask to the Deanery, to talk with now the danger was gone by, to laugh with at the Whigs' discomfiture—Harding was dead, at the Drapier's hand.

He felt, suddenly, that he was too tired to fight again. He had completed his journey, and got nowhere, now or ever; even the thrill of victory, that had seemed sufficient compensation, left only bitterness now upon the tongue. Of all his young dream nothing remained but this: that at the end of a journey it is a pleasant thing to have a house to repair to, and a friend waiting in it. That at any rate he had, the house and the

friend,^m and peace, and quiet that was not empty, but full of warmth and comfort. His mind turned to Stella, homewards; the shadow that lay between them, he ignored.

He had done what he set out to do, what no one else could have done; there was no cause now for reproach, no further need for secrecy; she could take her place as mistress of the Deanery House with everything clean, clear, and open between them and to the world. Thus he rehearsed it to himself, but without conviction. The shadow was there still; all his reasoning could not whip his weary spirit into pride; and so for the first time he approached her humbly: and planned a belated wooing.

Spring was on the way again, and with it, her birthday. He wrote her annual verses; they cost him many pains, and were informed with an unwonted clumsy tenderness; although his observation, as usual, was brutally exact. Beauty and wit, he wrote, have always been confined to youth—"nor ever nymph inspired to rhyme, unless like Venus, in her prime." But, he went on,

"But Stella, say, what evil tongue,
Reports you are no longer young;
That Time sits with his scythe to mow,
Where erst sat Cupid with his bow:
That half your locks are turned to grey?
I'll ne'er believe a word they say.
'Tis true, but let it not be known,
My eyes are somewhat dimmish grown;
For Nature, always in the right,
To your decay adapts my sight;
And wrinkles undistinguished pass,
For I'm ashamed to use a glass:
And till I see them with these eyes,
Whoever says you have them, lies.
No length of time can make you quit,
Honour and virtue, sense and wit,
Thus you may still be young to me,
While I can better hear than see."

He had this ready and waiting for her, on the day—and she did not come. Instead, there was a message: she was sick. He went immediately to her lodging; she would not see him.

This brought him to an abrupt stop. He was not so much bewildered as incredulous; he stared for a moment at the servant girl, and then brushed the message on one side. "Go back," he instructed her, "and this time announce me. Say it is the Dean——"

"Sure I know your reverence," she said pertly. "I told who 'twas plain enough, and she said——"

"She?" he asked sharply. "Who pray is 'she'?"

"The mistress," the girl said, "begging your honour's pardon. The mistress said, no, I will not see him, tell him I will not. And then Mistress Dingley packed me off out of the room, and so I came and did as I was bid." She watched him with bright, curious eyes. He was irritably conscious of her interest.

"So Mrs. Dingley is there?" he said. "Go fetch her then. Bring her to me here. Haste now." He stood with one foot on the fender, scowling at the handful of fire in the grate. He was angry with Stella for sending such a message by such a messenger, so angry that he almost forgot his anxiety. When Dingley came in: "A fine piece of manners this is," he burst out. "Am I a tradesman, to send a kitchen-wench——?" Then he saw her face, and his anger died. "What is it?" he asked. "Rebecca, what is wrong?"

She looked at him helplessly, and sat down. She raised her hands and let them fall again to her lap. She seemed to have put on twenty years; her eyes were red and her hair disordered. "I've been at my wit's end," she said.

"But what is it that is wrong?" he insisted. "Has she had the physician? Has she any fever, or——?"

"No, no," she said, as if she explained everything. "Nothing of that. It was the letter——"

"The letter," he said slowly.

"Aye, the letter," she said. "First she sat so still I thought she had fallen asleep reading it. Then I saw her eyes were open, but when I spoke she did not answer. Nor would she no matter what I did. I took her by the hand—it was cold as a frog—but she might have been in a swoon, or dead, for all the notice she took. And there she has sat all this live-long day, and never spoken, nor eaten one mouthful, only cried a little once or twice. And this her birthday, too." She put a hand to her head. "I don't know what to do," she said, tiredly. "When

I tried to take the letter from her, she covered it over with her hand. When I asked who it was from, she shook her head. When you came I thought it would rouse her, and so it did, but only to say she would not see you. But I must go back." She raised herself to her feet. "I do not like to leave her."

He had stood through this like a figure of stone. Now he put a hand on Dingley's arm. "Listen," he said. "I will tell you what you must do now. She must go to bed: you must put her there. Give her some warm milk, make her drink it. And tell her that to-morrow I shall come again: I must and will see her to-morrow. And give her—these verses—with my love."

He went home, and sat all the evening in company, silent, cold and sick at heart. He knew who the letter was from.

By morning his spirits had lifted, a very little. There was nothing that could not be explained, nothing that had not been explained already. And now, in addition to the fact that in over a year he had not seen Vanessa once, their marriage surely was sufficient proof of his constancy. That was the answer to every question: Stella herself had admitted it. She could not deny it now. He did not formulate these thoughts in words; indeed, they were but half-apprehended shapes of feeling produced automatically and automatically left unexamined, for fear the uneasiness that cloaked them in darkness should itself take shape and let in light on them and on itself.

He found Stella prepared to meet him. She was composed and calm, and her face showed no trace of tears. Her pallor was unbelievable; under her eyes it deepened to a violet shadow. She gave him her hand, and admitted that she felt better, speaking clearly and coldly. She looked at him fully, and asked: "What do you want of me, Jonathan?"

The tone of the words took him aback: the question was meant literally. "Want of you?" he repeated. "Why, nothing. I wanted to know that you were better, and to give you my congratulations on your birthday—but—want of you? I do not understand."

"I am glad," she said. "Because I have nothing to give you. It is very fortunate—that your wants and my power to give come to an end together."

"What do you mean?" he asked. His neckband seemed to have grown tighter; he pulled at it gently. "Are we talking riddles?"

She passed him a paper from the table; under it was his sheet of verses, still crumpled from his hand, plainly unopened. "You have not read my—birthday gift?" he said. She shrugged her shoulders very slightly, and said nothing. His eyes returned to the paper she had given him, with a lost look.

"Madam——" it began. "If you are surprised to receive a letter from one who is a stranger to you, do not, I beg you, be put off from reading it. The effort it has cost me to write—but why say it? I could ask you to believe that I was proud once, but what is the use? I have no pride left, nor shame, but only misery, and that is why I write to you—a woman's heart may be touched by it, if a man's is not. If he is nothing to you, it costs you nothing to tell me so; if—the contrary, then as he is now yours, you can afford to be kind, and put an end to my uncertainty. It is not knowing I cannot bear—madam, for God's sake tell me, what is he to you, and you to him—J. S., I mean, of course. You will see I do not know what I write, indeed I do not; I have worn out my days in sighing, and my nights in watching, for so long now, that I sometimes wonder my senses have not left me long ago. I could almost wish they had, for then I could forget that I was happy once, and not be under the constant necessity to compare now with then, to know how low I have come down. But I run on to no purpose. You can give me some little ease, madam—I ask it as charity: do not refuse me."

It was signed: Hester van Homrigh. When he looked up from reading, his eyes were haggard; but Stella was watching him with cool composure.

He straightened himself. "Well?" he said harshly.

"Well," she said. "What shall I tell her?"

"Tell her?" he repeated. "Tell her nothing. Ignore it. I am surprised you did not ignore it from the first."

"Are you?" she asked. "Truly? And yet I never thought of it."

"It is written in malice," he said, and pulled at his neckband. "Damnable, vicious malice."

"Maybe," she said. "But why?"

"To make mischief," he said. "To make trouble 'twixt you and me."

"Yes," she said. "But why? For what purpose?"

He did not answer. She began to speak again, in the same gentle tone. "When I read it first," she said. "I thought I was dying, and I was glad, because, I thought, I could not bear the pain that would come back if I lived. But I was wrong. I am alive, and I feel no pain. I have grown out of pain, and come to reason. That's strange, is it not?—to know what this reason is that you have always talked of? It is like a cold light that shines through pain, and lies, and anger; malice and passion. It sees all, and feels nothing. It is a great gift."

He would have spoken then, but she stopped him, and went on. "I read the letter again, and I could have wept for her—for Vanessa: but my tears were all shed. I do not think she wrote in malice, Jonathan. Not that I care. Pain or malice, it is all one: the cause was the same, and the cause was—you; you and your reason, you and your—lies."

He sprang up. "Be quiet," he said hoarsely. "You are ill——"

"I am not ill," she said. "And you will listen. You dare not go, not now. Listen: I have loved you all my life——"

"And I you," he said, coming back to her. "Believe me——"

"You have loved what I could give you," she said. "And used it, without mercy. But you were honest: I thought you were honest. You made it plain there was an idea you loved more, an idea of yourself that must be kept immaculate. I was content, I had to be content, I made myself content. I succeeded so well that when I first heard of Vanessa, I was jealous—jealous for that idea of you I had given my life to. It was only when you asked me—to be your wife—that I was afraid. It was—such a great change. It was so purposeless. The reasons you gave meant nothing. They would have had equal force at any time in the last twenty years. I began to ask myself questions, and once I had begun, I could not stop till I had found the answer. There was only one answer: conscience. Only a great wrong done to me could make you so wrong yourself. And yet I was not satisfied. You swore to me there was nothing——"

"Do you know you are talking like a mad woman?" he said. His voice rose. "Do you know you are driving me mad?"

"—and so I dared not refuse you," she went on, a kind of deathly serenity in her look. "I dared not refuse what I had wanted all my life. I married you. And now I know I was betrayed. That letter——"

"Lies," he shouted. He tugged again at his collar. It burst open. "All lies. Lies. Lies."

"'He is now yours,'" she quoted. "Now? 'I was happy once?' But not now—now he is yours? Do you think a woman tells that kind of lie to another woman—a rival?"

He achieved repression with a frightful effort. His eyes glared. "I tell you it is all lies," he said rapidly. "She has never been anything to me, nor I to her. God is my witness, that is true. Maybe it is His wish that in the majority passion should prevail over reason. How else should the world continue? Nevertheless reason is His gift also, and having it, I have made my will the master. Not for me the sweat and stink of lust. My will," he repeated, gulping for air, "my will has kept my body clean——"

"No," she said, as if to herself, "no." She stared at him with sick eyes.

"But I say yes," he bore her down. "I have lived cleanly—and that is what matters. I am not answerable to God for weaknesses He Himself implanted in me. What passes in a man's private mind concerns no one——"

"Oh God," she said. "Have you dealt with her too as you have dealt with me? Or worse: used her to titillate your—your weaknesses, you call them—and yet held her off—in torture——" She drew a shuddering breath. "That is horrible, horrible." She wrung her hands. "You came once to ask my pardon—I see why. But have you ever asked hers? Have you?"

"I am not concerned with her," he said in a forced, unnatural tone, "it is you I have loved——"

"Do you speak of love?" she said. She seemed to become suddenly smaller. She lay back in her chair and closed her eyes. "Do you not know what you have done?" she asked, almost inaudibly.

"I am telling you what I have done," he struck the table with his fist. "Why do you twist everything I say? I have

lived according to my lights. I have never hidden what they are. I have looked at life with the eyes of reason, and despised it——”

She opened her eyes again. Something in her look silenced him.

“And now you come to the end,” she said. “The only end. Now you despise yourself. You know it is true. You may talk, and talk, and talk, bluster and shout, and it avails you nothing at all. You have despised mankind, and forgotten you too were a man. You have denied your natural desires, and made your days wretched and your nights desolate. You have brought misery to those you love and who loved you. And in the end you are a man still. How you must hate yourself for that. How—you must—hate—yourself.” Then with the same unfathomable distant look: “Will you go?” she said, in a whisper. “I am very tired.” She turned her head away.

He glanced about him with a wild air. She sat motionless. He looked at the letter, still in his hand. “Very well,” he said, between clenched teeth. “If that is all, I will go. If you have emptied yourself of venom, I will go. I cannot think you are in your right mind. When you recover, you may wish to see me again. If so, you may send for me. But now I will go. There is another explanation to be given, and by God I will have it too.”

She did not move. He left the room with deliberate steps. He returned to the Deanery; called for a horse, and while it was being brought, replaced his neckband with a clean one, freshly starched. He could not remember how the other had become crumpled and broken; he did not try. He remembered nothing; his movements were those of a drunken man, slow and unnaturally precise. He descended the stairs, mounted his horse, and rode off in the direction of Kildrought.

His eyes, congested with blood, saw sparks and wisps of flame that danced on the hedgetops; his mind was like a dark cavern filled with smoke. His one conscious thought was the explanation he would have: an admission that would wipe out Stella’s words, make them unspoken, make it unnecessary ever to consider them.

He rode steadily, but without haste.

* * * * *

He threw the letter on the table, and stood silent. Vanessa moistened her lips. "You will not let her answer me, then?" she said at last. Her voice was flawed, like a cracked bell. She pressed a hand to her heart; she was thinner, her gown hung loosely on her; the cords in her throat stood out.

"Why did you write?" he asked, stonily.

"You would not answer," she said. "You sent my letter back."

"Why did you write?" he asked again, as if she had said nothing.

"I was so miserable," she said. "I could not bear it any more."

"Liar," he said. "You knew. You knew I was sickened of you. And because you were not to paw me with your wet hands, you must write your filthy lies to my friend——"

She laughed suddenly, on a high sharp note.

"Your friend," she said. "Oh yes."

"Take care," he said. "I have no patience left. Admit you lied; that is all I want."

"I lied?" she said. "I?" Her voice rose. "You say that—to me? When I was fool enough to spare you, and wrote only of my own folly? Tell me where else I lied."

She breathed hard and fast; her cheeks were flushed red, and her eyes shone. She advanced towards him, touched him on the bosom with her forefinger. "You are the liar," she said softly.

He retreated a step; she advanced again. "I thought it was your tongue that lied," she said. "I always thought so. Your eyes told such a different story. Such a different story, Jonathan." She touched him again. He backed against the table. "Was I wrong?" She looked closely into his face, and laughed again, softly. "I do not believe it," she said with a sort of quiet glee that mounted as she spoke. "You are the same as always. I am changed: I have been hungry so long my flesh is wasted and the ugly bones show through—but you: you do not see that, do you, Jonathan? You are cruel to me, you tear me to pieces with your cruelty—but you cannot look at me without desire."

Her breath was hot on his cheek. "Back," he said hoarsely. "Get back from me." She did not move.

"Do you not wish I was proud?" she said, laughing. "I

was once. You would come to me, I thought. What a fool I was—as though pride were worth suffering for. I let you stab me, because I was proud—offered you my breast to pierce, over and over. And all the time it needed but a step to bring me where I am now——” She came forward again, pressing against him: he put his hands on the edge of the table for support, throwing back his head, his teeth showing in a rigid grin.

She stretched both arms about his neck, pulling his wig awry, and kissed him on the mouth.

For a second he stood quite still. Then with a kind of gasping roar, he flung her away, so violently that she missed her footing and fell, and sat looking up at him from the floor, leaning on one arm. His face was terrible; his eyes strained from their sockets, tears ran from them and down his cheeks. “You—dirty slut,” he said. “You—whore.” He sobbed with rage. “That is what you wanted—always. You could not rest until you had me down—with you—in the slime. And when you find—you cannot have me—you void your filth upon my friend—a friend—the woman——” He fought for breath. “My wife,” he said, choking.

“Your wife,” she repeated, without expression. Her mouth remained open in pure surprise. “Your wife,” she said. She put a hand to her face and began to laugh again, quietly, trying to hide it from him. It bubbled out of her in jets, carrying words with it: “You—and a wife. What do you want—with a wife?” Above her hand her eyes were full of pain.

“Be silent,” he said savagely. “Do you hear? Be silent.” She continued to laugh, helplessly, until he bent down and shook her by the shoulders, so that her head swung this way and that, like a doll’s. The breath stuck in her throat, she fell into a paroxysm of coughing; an angry, hollow sound. He let her go, and she lowered her hand; there was blood on it. She looked up at him with that painful look, but could not speak for coughing. He left her there.

He felt her mouth on his, hot and seeking. He felt her arms about him. He felt his heart leap—leap for joy at her touch. His soul sickened; he wept as he rode.

Chapter Seventeen

He seemed to have been riding for ever. The little time he had spent in Dublin, in preparation for his journey, had melted away. Each day he rode further, into the green wilderness of the south-west. He sat hunched in his saddle, and the mountains advanced slowly towards him, and passed, nodding; lakes swam softly by, under the sun, under the moon, placid and mirror-like, broken sometimes with rain. But the road was always the same road, the ruts were the ruts outside Kildrought; just behind him Vanessa was laughing, Vanessa's eyes looked after him, pleading; there was blood on her hand.

He could not leave her, she clung about his neck. Her body was warm against him; it was full of blood, pulsating, quickening his own pulse, until his own body shook with the furious beating of his heart. You cannot look at me without desire, she said. It was true, true, true: he could not even think of her without desire; he could not stop thinking of her; he stood on Carberry cliffs, and stared down at the sea; the surge of the waves about the black rocks was in tune with the thundering passion that possessed him. And all the time his brain, housed in the same body, watched with a cold nausea, registering every symptom of his own humanity with a contempt that went beyond contempt, went beyond himself, and took in the whole world of men. It took in everything; not only his body's longing for Vanessa, but its whole mechanism, the evacuation of his bowels, the way he sweated in the sun, even the smell of his soiled clothes; took it in, noted it, magnified it, and hated it.

He rode from dawn until after dusk, until he could have fainted from sheer exhaustion; and at night, sleepless, continued the struggle in his chamber. Wherever he lay—at a poor inn, ringed about by lonely hills—with a rustic squire like Kilpatrick,

where the dogs snapped and snarled about the table all through supper—in a country parsonage, whose snuffy yellow-eyed incumbent brewed his own whisky-toddy over a fire of turf—wherever he lay, his name was known, his fame had preceded him, he was received with an open warm hospitality. He repaid this with scowls, sarcasms, and harsh thanks; his bitterness found friendliness mere prying, to be repelled and crushed into the dust. He would retire early, and spend the dark hours writing, by the light of candles, from his saddlebags.

He added a last book to his travels. Without hope, without faith, without compassion, but with an icy detailed cruelty, he looked at mankind and himself, and saw nothing good. He looked for filth, and found it, gulped it like an emetic, and vomited his disgust on paper, writing as if in acid on his own flesh. In the mornings he was neither cleansed nor comforted, but half suffocated by stink and smoke. He would come down twitching, with fiery eyes, as though his inner eyelids had been rubbed with ashes; insist, no matter where he was, on paying for his board; and ride on.

He never thought of Stella in all these months, not once. His thoughts were on this world: it was as though she dwelt elsewhere.

By the end of July he had ridden four hundred miles, and was in Clonfert. The Travels were finished; he had swallowed down the human race, ingurgitated it whole in one bolus, and digested it at last. There could be no more disillusion, no more pain; he expected nothing, ever again. So he told himself; and, indeed, when he wrote to Sheridan, from Clonfert, and enquired for "the ladies," and their health, the enquiry was as casual as it seemed. There was no feeling in him.

The letter was never answered; Sheridan was at Quilca; it was not until he reached Dublin that he had word of Stella. She and Rebecca had spent the summer with Charles Ford at Woodpark, and were still there. He did not ask when they were expected back, or make any comment; but settled into the Deanery in a cold abstraction that was unmoved by an item read by chance in an old news-sheet. It was Vanessa's name that caught his eye: she had died a few weeks after their last meeting. He admitted neither sorrow nor relief; he had

finally killed her image in his heart, her death was no more now than a confirmation of an event long gone by.

He wrote to Pope, describing his way of living: "If any method could be called so in this country. I choose my companions among those of least consequence and most compliance: I read the most trifling books I can find, and whenever I write it is upon the most trifling subjects; but riding, walking and sleeping take up eighteen of the twenty-four hours." As a result, there was none to dare to tell him the gossip of the Town, running about greedy and unchecked. But when Sheridan returned, he came hurrying to the Deanery with a confession to make.

"It has laid heavy on my mind all the summer," he said. "Yet now—— I do not know how to tell you." The Dean gave him no help: he ploughed on. "It is to do with a young woman—a lady—that died soon after you went away. Her name was Van—Van—an outlandish-sounding——"

"Van Homrigh," Swift said, without expression.

"You knew her?" Sheridan said. "Then maybe I did right after all——"

"If you will say what you did," the Dean said grimly, "we shall know the sooner."

"Well——" The young man hesitated still. "The poor lady died, and soon after talk began to be whispered about—idle foolish talk that no one who knew you, Mr. Dean, could give any credence to. I did not: nor did I even take the pains to refute it——"

"You were right there, at least," Swift said.

The young man was pleased: he went on with more confidence: "I must repeat it now—the gist of it—you will pardon me, sir, but I must repeat it for you to know what I did." The Dean nodded impatiently; he did not speak. "They said—'twas reported, that is—she left her fortune between Bishop Berkeley—whom she did not know—and one Robert Marshall, and that you should have had it, but it was left to them on a condition——" He paused. "There was a poem—and some letters——" His voice tailed off at the look he got.

"Go on," Swift said. He sat very still.

"They were to be printed," he said.

"And then——?"

"Then I thought that was too much," Sheridan said. "I—wrote to the Bishop, representing that in your absence——"

"And they were never put out?"

"He withdrew the letters from the printer. But the verses—I do not know how it was—I have seen a copy, in manuscript, that was being passed about—of course it may have been a forgery, done for malice' sake——"

Swift silenced him. "It was no forgery," he said. "I have no doubt I wrote them, though it was a long while ago, and I never saw them since. As for malice, I have borne a great deal more than that; and those who will like me less for having writ such a trifle, may think as they please. God knows I need no further proof of the baseness of mankind. But you are a true friend, Tom. This is not the first service you have done me: I hope you will never use less freedom toward me: I hope you will always tell me of anything to my hurt, which others dare not."

Now he found it in himself to be glad that Stella had been away, and was away still.

It was a fugitive and wordless feeling, deeply hidden. He would never face a loss, but rather choose to act as though the object lost had never existed. So with Stella now; but here it was as if, unconsciously, he simulated his reaction to a loss not yet suffered, setting up in advance a sort of shield against a blow yet to come. Even when he started for London a week before her return, it was in response to the exhortations of his friends there, it was to arrange publication of the Travels; it was not for a moment because she was returning. It was once again for any reason in the world but mere procrastination, anything but a putting off of ultimate knowledge. The truth was, he could not and did not visualize life without her.

The Town was agog to greet him. He fell at once into a round of visits: to Bolingbroke, back from exile and living at Dawley; to Pope in the calculated wilderness of his garden at Twickenham; to Cirencester with Pope and Gay. He was received by the Princess of Wales at Leicester House, and made much of; and even, by the intervention of Lord Peterborough, had a cool and unsatisfactory interview with Walpole himself, "to represent the affairs of Ireland to him in a true light." In

this design he failed: "I saw he had conceived opinions—which I could not reconcile to the notions I had of liberty, a possession always understood by the British nation to be the inheritance of a human creature." As for the thousand pounds he had ever held to be owed him by the English Government, for the expenses of his installation—"I scorned to ask him for it," he wrote to Sheridan. "Tell this to no one but the ladies," he added. "I know Mrs. Johnson will be pleased with it."

And that was the measure of how far he had come; how near he was to his house, and his friend waiting in it. Instead of the daily letter, in which every success, every failure, every good thing said, every meal, every pebble tripped over in the roadway, was put down in the certainty that anything concerning him she would be glad to know—now this: this passing on, through a third party, of one solitary item that he felt might show him in a good light, begging for approbation, hoping that word might come back: Yes, she is pleased with you. It was his first difficult attempt at reconciliation; but all he got in reply was letters from Dingley, not only failing to give comfort, but actually filling him with a vague apprehension, letters he came to be afraid to open for fear of what might be in them.

Still he plunged on, living, casting down his gauntlet before life's continuing menace, dreaming even, of the fine house and garden and park and wine-cellar in France, that Bolingbroke had offered him to pass away the winter in, wishing he could go there, and that Stella could go with him. None of his fears appeared, no blackness of cynicism to dim his friends' gaiety: he was determined not to be an object of pity to these men he loved, but to resemble still Arbuthnot's picture of him, "like a man knocked down, but still with a stern countenance, and aiming a blow at his adversaries." His business, too, was not allowed to rest: the Travels went to the printer with all the old circumstance of secrecy, delivered in the dark of the moon by a man in a hackney-coach, who threw out the parcel at the printer's feet and drove away, unseen. Publication was urged forward by letter; the book appeared in November, and "Gulliver is a happy man," Arbuthnot told his friend, "that at his age can write such a merry book": the last irony, that the sum of all his misanthropy should be greeted as a merry tale. It was the universal verdict; the court, the cabinet, and the

whole of the three kingdoms united in one great outburst of laughter. In the middle of it came the letter he had dreaded. Stella was very ill.

His counterfeit defences fell immediately about his ears. He could not even imagine she would recover. She would die, she was bound to die, simply because it was the one thing needed to complete his destruction. He wrote wildly to Worral: "I have these two months seen through Mrs. Dingley's disguises. Indeed, ever since I left you, my heart has been so sunk, that I have not been the same man, nor ever shall be again; but drag on a wretched life until it shall please God to call me away. I must tell you as a friend, that if you have reason to believe Mrs. Johnson cannot hold out until my return, I would not think of coming to Ireland."

He could not bear to think of it, but could not help reverting to it. His mind ran out of his control; from speaking of making her will he went on: "I would not for the universe be present at such a trial as seeing her depart. She will be among friends, that upon her own account and great worth, will tend her with all possible care, where I should be a trouble to her, and the greatest torment to myself." Himself, himself, the two inextricably intertwined, so that it was hard to know sometimes which of the two was going, which staying; hard to know what was selfishness, what remorse, what pain, and what mere everyday. The ladies must not lodge in the Deanery—"it cannot but be a very improper thing for that house to breathe her last in"—and then again the refrain: "I am determined not to go to Ireland, to find her just dead, or dying. I have bought her a repeating gold watch," he continued distractedly, "for her ease in winter nights. I designed to have surprised her with it; but now I would have her know it, that she may see how my thoughts were always to make her easy. I would rather have good news from you, than Canterbury, though it were given me upon my own terms."

Five days later he was writing to Stopford, with a kind of crazy conventionality, of "the younger of the two ladies, with whom I have lived in the greatest friendship for thirty-three years. But I know not what I am saying; believe me, violent friendship is much more lasting, and as much engaging, as violent love."

And to Sheridan: "All my preparations will not suffice to make me bear it like a philosopher, nor altogether like a Christian. Nay, if I were now near her, I would not see her; I could not behave myself tolerably, and should redouble her sorrow."

But in spite of all evasions, all the frenzied protestations of his writhing spirit, he could not stay away. He left London suddenly, without farewells, and came to Holyhead on a Sunday night, dragged at the tail of a great wind that caught him up, passed him, and whipped even the placid stagnant water of the inner harbour into stinking foam. His head ached, he was giddy and uncertain on his feet, his old deafness, back again, interposed an infuriating curtain between him and the world. The Captain of the packet, when found in a tap-room, was half drunk and wholly uncivil. The Dean's name meant nothing to him. He would not sail, he said, in such a sea, for the Pope of Rome and the whole college of cardinals. He crossed himself devoutly. Swift turned away in disgust. "And if the wind drops," the man shouted after him, "still I wait for passengers—unless your Holiness has a mind to pay for twenty."

The Inn was empty, but for a young man who smiled and would have been friendly. He got black looks and silence for his pains. There was no wine; the ale was muddy, the bread mouldy and reeking vilely of fish besides. "I come from being used like an Emperor in London to be used worse than a dog at Holyhead," he wrote in his journal—and this lasted for five days; five days of solitude, discomfort, and suspense; of howling wind and desolate thoughts, of going to the door to look out at the tumbling sea, and coming back to the smoky wretched fire. On Friday the wind moderated a little; the captain was satisfied with his muster of passengers; they sailed. Within half an hour the gale rose again; at two in the afternoon, after four hours' tacking, about and about, they ran back to the shelter of the land, to anchor. At midnight they set sail once more. When they reached Ireland at last, sick and exhausted, there was a fleet of little boats to meet them, covered with flags and bunting, and with men standing in them, cheering. The dock, too, was beflagged, and the streets: Dublin was welcoming the Drapier home.

He went at once to Ormonde Quay. There was straw down

in the roadway; the knocker was muffled; in the house a smell of sickness tainted the air, sweet and choking. He mounted the stairs as though he were carrying a ponderous weight on his shoulders, breathing painfully against a rigid band drawn tight about his chest. He stood outside her door. She had refused him the last time; she could not refuse him now. He put his hand to the latch and opened the door; if he had been going to his death it would have cost him less effort. He went in, very softly.

She was lying with her eyes closed, and did not move as he sat down beside the bed. Each breath she took made a rustling sound, very faint but harsh; apart from that she might have been lifeless. The foetid heat of the room brought on an increasing nausea. Sweat stood on his forehead and upper lip. He waited.

At last she opened her eyes. She showed no surprise at seeing him there, but looked at him with a kindly look, as though she had expected him. She did not speak; her hand, lying outside the covers, moved slightly. He put his own over it, but she was not satisfied with that—he could feel her fingers moving, and freed her. She placed her hand on his. It was as dry as paper, and no heavier; it burnt his skin where it lay.

He said painfully: "I came as soon—as I could. The boat——" His voice failed him. She pressed his hand, almost imperceptibly. "This time—it is for good," he went on, recovering himself. "I shall not leave you again. Never." She smiled a little. "It is true," he insisted. "I swear it. From now, I am yours. That—that pride you hated so—it is all gone—and now, now we can——"

Her head moved on the pillow. It was a moment before he realized that she had spoken; the words made the merest shadow of a sound: "It is too late—now."

He stared at her dumbly. Then: "No——" he said.

"Too late," she said again. "Yes, it is. This time it is I—that leave you."

"No," he said loudly. The band about his chest burst open. He fell on his knees beside the bed. "It is wicked—to say——" He hid his face in the bedclothes, unable to continue. Her hand touched his cheek, like a leaf falling. "Poor Jonathan," she said, in a faint whisper.

When he looked up, she had relapsed again into her sleep. Her eyes were closed. He stayed there on his knees a long time, watching her face and listening to her breathing.

All Dublin seemed to know he had returned. The weavers of the Bail were building a bonfire in the close as the early dusk thickened, a procession of all shapes, all ages, hale and crippled: all determined to do him honour. They stood exchanging ribald pleasantries to watch their betters mount the steps to the Deanery door: Dublin society considered it necessary to pay its respects in person, and from six o'clock onwards the door opened and shut with scarcely a pause. The Dean received all who came with a cold unmoved courtesy, as though his body continued to function, his tongue to form words, mechanically. His spirit held itself apart, intent.

At eight o'clock he was called out. It was the little maid from Ormonde Quay, the same whose pert manner had so angered him—once before. She was not pert now. Her elvish dirty face was streaked with tears. She handed him a note from Rebecca. "My poor Hetty has gone," she wrote. "She never waked again, after you saw her. I cannot write more now. She wished you to have this."

He looked at the ringlet of hair that lay on his palm; closed his fingers on it, and turning abruptly left the girl standing where she was, without a word. He went into the darkness of his study, put the note and the black curl on his desk, and sat down. Without warning, the Cathedral bells rang out, a joyous welcoming peal, but he did not hear them. The fire in the close threw light into the room, light flickering on the walls, light leaping and slithering across the polished furniture, pulsing irregularly on the ceiling. In it, the curl of her hair seemed to move with a life of its own. Suddenly he could not bear it. He took a sheet of paper from the desk, placed the curl in the centre of it, folded it over and endways, and sealed it down. His hands, empty, rested on the table on either side of the little package. They trembled slightly. He sat very still, and looked at the envelope without seeing it. He looked down the cold and lonely corridor of time to come: years, years, without ease, without friendship, without harbour—and at the end saw darkness.

He gathered together the past, heaping it on his head, seeking deliberately to blow up again the old fury, the old despair, to pile yesterday on to to-day, to remember everything together—and he remembered: everything. Vanessa, gone, her beauty and her pride gone with her. Stella, gone, the ease and healing that were hers gone too. Youth, ambition—all gone; his flesh unsatisfied, his heart dead. There was no help in memory, no pain to cow the present pain. The only hope was darkness, and that would come. He could see it, waiting to engulf him, to take his mind and blot it out. It meant peace, and rest, and oblivion—and his very soul revolted from it. Never, while breath was in him: never, while a spark still glowed among the ashes, never could he submit to it.

He picked up his pen, and waited. When his hand stopped trembling, he wrote on the little package, in a clear script: "Only a woman's hair."

The bells pealed incessantly, shaking the night with a jubilant clangour, tumbling headlong and again from top to bottom of a brazen stair.



HERE lies the body of Jonathan Swift,
Where rage and resentment can
No longer
Eat into the heart.
Go, passer-by,
And do, if you can, as he did,—
A man's part
In the defence of liberty.

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